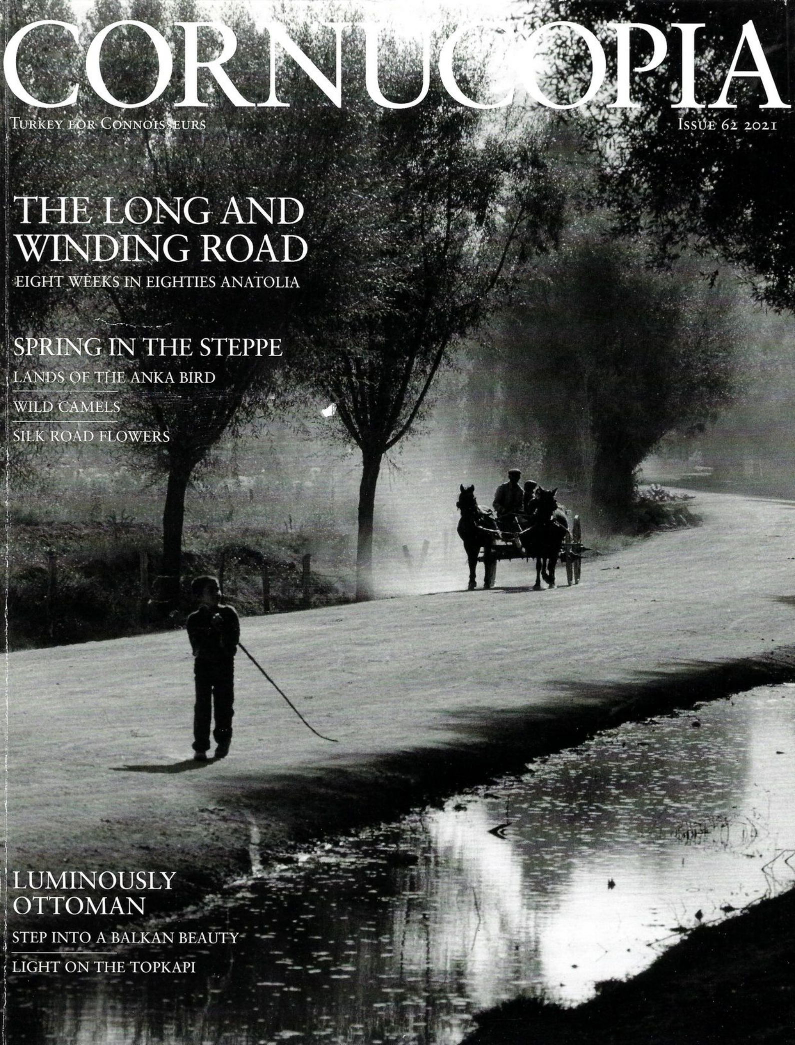
CORNUCOPIA

TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

ISSUE 62 2021



THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

EIGHT WEEKS IN EIGHTIES ANATOLIA

SPRING IN THE STEPPE

LANDS OF THE ANKA BIRD

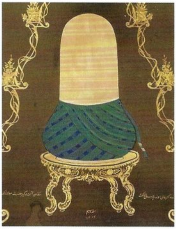
WILD CAMELS

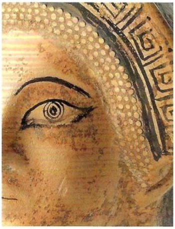
SILK ROAD FLOWERS

LUMINOUSLY OTTOMAN

STEP INTO A BALKAN BEAUTY

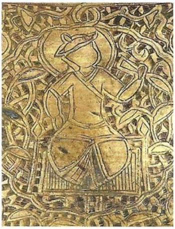
LIGHT ON THE TOPKAPI

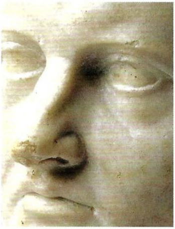


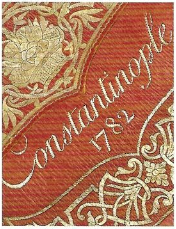


Preserving The Past

A SELECTION
FROM
THE SADBERK
HANIM MUSEUM







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Contents

TURKEY FOR CONNOISSEURS

TRAVELLERS' TALES

COVER STORY

ADVENTURES OF THE THREE DONKETEERS
Anatolia on foot 40 years ago, by Christopher Trillo · 42

CENTRAL ASIA

FROM STEPPE TO SNOW TO DESERT SANDS

THE FABRIC OF LIFE: ERGUN ÇAĞATAY'S EPIC JOURNEY
Caroline Eden introduces a new book by the celebrated photographer · 106
IN THE REALM OF THE ICE QUEEN Chris Gardner tracks the ancient flora of the Silk Road · 114
KING OF THE GOBI John Hare on how the two-humped wild camel was saved from extinction · 128

ART AND ARCHITECTURE

LIVING THE OTTOMAN DREAM Berrin Torolsan is enchanted by the House of Hindliyan · 24
BEHIND PALACE DOORS Philip Mansel on the fascinating go-between
who revealed the Topkapı to Enlightenment Europe · 80

CONNOISSEUR

LIFE AFTER LIFE A tribute to Suna Kıraç, founder of the Pera Museum · 5
MOTIFS AND MOTIVES The meanings and origins of designs, by Venetia Porter · 8
THE ART OF LETTER WRITING Tim Stanley on the father of Turkish calligraphy · 10
Plus exhibition and saleroom highlights · 12

BOOKS

A LONG JOURNEY Rosamond E Mack on Bellini's influential portrait of Mehmed the Conqueror · 19
A MAGNIFICENT SÜLEYMAN Julian Raby on a newly discovered portrait of the Sultan in his prime · 21
RIGHT ROYAL DOUBLE ACT Barnaby Rogerson on Alexander the Great and his father · 22
HERE'S TO YOU, MRS ROBINSON David Barchard on the colourful life of an East End widow · 23

COOKERY

SWEET ENDINGS
Berrin Torolsan on *hoşaf*, the Turkish compote, a perfect finale to any meal · 134

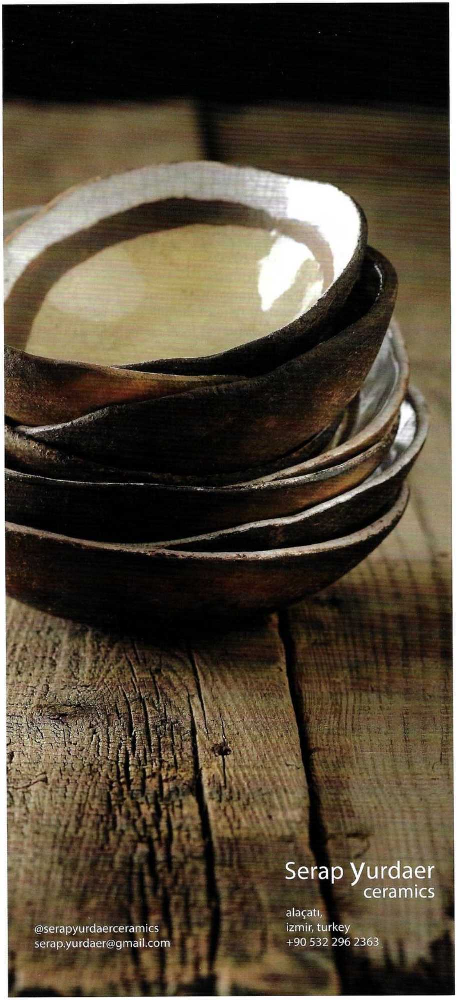
FROM OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISTANBUL DIARY Private view, by Andrew Finkel · 16
CONCERTS Virtuoso reality, by John Shakespeare Dyson · 143
RESTAURANTS Mega bites, by Andrew Finkel · 144
FILM Beauty and the bees, by Christopher Trillo · 148

POSTSCRIPT

DAVID BARCHARD 1947–2020
Roger Norman and Patricia Daunt pay tribute to a fine journalist and scholar · 146

COVER On the road, Anatolia 1981, by Stephen Scoffham (see 'Adventures of the Three Donketeers', page 42)



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THE ORIGINAL 'CORNUCOPIA'
The Latin *cornu copiæ* or 'horn of plenty', a horn overflowing with flowers, fruit and corn and a symbol of prosperity and abundance in the cities of Anatolia.

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ON THE 500TH
ANNIVERSARY
OF HIS DEATH

Şeyh Hamdullah

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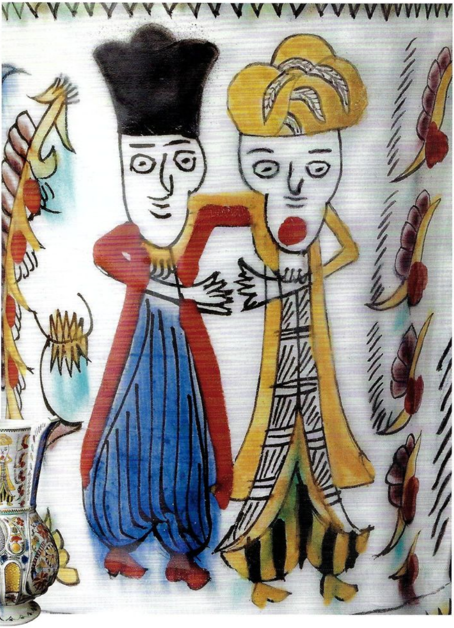
CONNOISSEUR

ISTANBUL'S PRIVATE MUSEUMS AND THE WOMEN WHO INSPIRED THEM.
THE GRAMMAR OF DESIGN, THE ART OF THE PEN, PLUS PERFECT POTS AND A PERSIAN FEAST

LIFE AFTER LIFE

WE ARE ALL THE POORER FOR THE LOSS OF SUNA KIRAÇ, BUT HER ENLIGHTENED BEQUESTS IN THE FACE OF ADVERSITY WILL ENRICH TURKEY FOR GENERATIONS TO COME

SUNA AND INAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION ARCHIVE



SUNA AND INAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION

The businesswoman and visionary philanthropist Suna Kıraç died on September 15, 2020, at the age of 79, but her legacy to health, education and the arts in Turkey will long survive her. Her achievements are the more remarkable for the fact that, for the last 20 years of her life, she was paralysed, able to communicate only with her eyes, spelling out her wishes by winking when shown letters on an alphabet card.

Born in Ankara on June 3, 1941, the youngest child of the industrialist Vehbi Koç and his wife, Sadberk, the young Suna Koç attended Arnavutköy American College for Girls (Robert College) and dreamt of furthering her education in the USA. She qualified to study at the prestigious Wharton Business School, but her parents opposed the plan. "My shop counter is the best university," said her father, Turkey's wealthiest businessman, protesting that he would miss her too much. "I'll train you," he said. She would later joke that she had

Above Family ties: Vehbi Koç with his daughter Suna in the Sixties
Inset and right An Orthodox priest and a turbaned Muslim embrace on an 18th-century Kütahya pitcher from the Pera Museum, founded by the Kıraç family

been "the first and only student of Vehbi Koç University".

Showing a strong streak of independence, however, and determined to secure an academic education, she first studied banking and finance at Boğaziçi University, only afterwards working for and with her father until his death in 1996. She began on the lowest rung of the ladder, with an internship in the Koç Group, eventually attaining the role of deputy chairman of Koç Holding's board of directors.

In December 1967 she married İnan Kıraç, at the time general manager of Otoyol (the Koç Holding company that made Fiat lorries and midibuses). In 2003 the couple established the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation with their daughter, İpek, to sponsor "educational, cultural, artistic and healthcare initiatives".

The first of these was the Pera Museum, which opened in 2005 behind the Neoclassical façade of the old Bristol Hotel, to become a landmark Beyoğlu institution. Endowed with three spectacular permanent collections – Orientalist Paintings, Anatolian Weights and Measures, and Kütahya Tiles and Ceramics – it has also ushered in a new era of world-class exhibitions. Goya, Picasso and Warhol are just three of the artists the museum has celebrated.

Suna Kıraç believed passionately that children were the future, and the Educational Volunteers Foundation of Turkey (TEGV) was the realisation of another of her dreams. "Let us provide education support to primary-school children," she said, "to teach them how to question, inquire and think, and let us prepare them for the future with kindness."

In its 26 years TEGV has touched the lives of more than three million young people, tens of thousands of whom have become volunteers in their turn.

ARA GÜLER © ARA GÜLER DOĞUŞ SANAT VE MÜZECİLİK AŞ

> *'Economic difficulties are overcome, political crises are resolved, but it is not possible to repair a society where children have been wasted'*
> – SUNA KIRAÇ

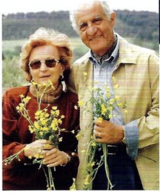
During her career, Suna Kıraç was garlanded with awards, medals and honours for services to business, culture, tourism and Turkish society. Her name lives on in the Suna Kıraç Hall, the theatre at Robert College, in libraries at Galatasaray and Koç Universities (her father's "university" did eventually become a reality), and in the Suna Kıraç Inter-School Short Story Competition.

Even at the darkest hour, she was a guiding light for her loved ones, and an inspiration to all Turkish women.

PERA MÜZESİ
PERA MUSEUM
PERA MÜZESİ

MONICA FRITZ

ÖZALP BIROL ARCHIVE



SUNA AND İNAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION ARCHIVE

Top Epitome of elegance: Ara Güler's portrait of Suna Koç, taken in the early 1960s
Above The Pera Museum, formerly the Bristol Hotel, opened in 2005
Right The Kıraçs in the early 2000s at their farm, famed for its gardens

Above Suna Kıraç arm in arm with Özalp Birol (in red tie) at the Kıraç yalı for his engagement to Merveş Emeç (in white) in 1999. With them are İnan Kıraç and daughter İpek
Opposite Kozbekçi Mustafa Ağa dressed in ermine, by Georg Engelhard Schröder, from the Pera's Orientalist Collection. The envoy was sent to Stockholm in 1727 to collect the King's debt to the Sultan

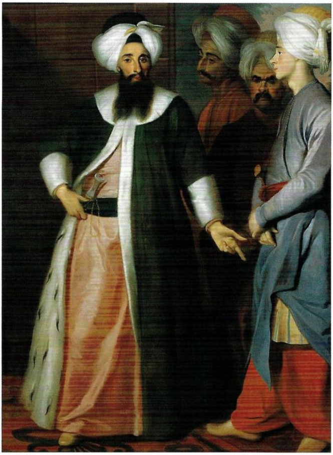
BRIGHT STAR

An affectionate
tribute to Suna Kıraç
by Özalp Bİrol

Among Suna Kıraç's gifts to posterity were the establishment of a foundation active in education, health, culture and the arts, a museum that would bring their family collection to the public, and an institute that undertook scientific research on Istanbul, the city she loved. My job was to bring her aspirations in the fields of culture and arts to fruition, and I was given great support and broad authority to do so. Thus were born the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation, the Pera Museum and the Istanbul Research Institute. Had we not been impeded by bureaucracy, the Kıraçs would have given Istanbul a world-class cultural centre designed by Frank Gehry, but that was not to be.

In the 20 years that I knew Suna Kıraç, and the 16 years I worked for her, I came to know her, both as a boss and as a person, and to understand her vision. For others wishing to grasp her ethic and what she did for her country, her memoir is required reading. Started in 1998, when she was already manifesting symptoms of ALS, a form of motor neurone disease, it is entitled *Ömrümden Uzun İdeallerim Var* (*My Ideals Will Outlive Me*), an expression of her wish that her endeavours should continue for posterity.

I first met Suna Kıraç in 1999. She and Bilge Emeç, my mother-in-law-to-be, had been friends since their days at the American College for Girls. Their husbands, İnan Kıraç and Çetin Emeç, were graduates of Galatasaray High School, and had worked together to establish the Galatasaray Education Foundation before Emeç, a newspaper editor, was heinously assassinated in March 1990.



SUNA AND İNAN KIRAÇ FOUNDATION

Nine years later, when Mehveş Emeç and I became engaged, our party was held at the Kıraç yalı on the Bosphorus. That night Suna Hanım, the perfect hostess, did everything to ease my nervousness. It was the start of a relationship of love and respect. Our wedding in July 2000 was, I believe, the last social event Suna Kıraç attended before she was hospitalised.

I was then in charge of Yapı Kredi Culture and Art, and the Kıraç family had founded the Mediterranean Research Centre in Antalya. In 2003 Suna and İnan Kıraç, and their daughter, İpek, honoured me by asking me to become the founding director of the Pera Museum, and so our collaboration began. The museum opened in 2005, and staged some groundbreaking exhibitions. Two overlapping shows in 2011, *Frida Kahlo and Diego Rivera* and *Scenes From Tsarist Russia*, together attracted over 140,000 visitors.

Suna Hanım would come to the museum almost weekly in the run-up to the opening. As her illness progressed, I would visit her in the yalı to discuss coming events. She was still able to guide us on debatable issues using just her eyes to indicate her approval or disapproval.

> *'For two decades, Suna Kıraç could only communicate with her eyes, guiding her family, her employees, and all who loved her like the North Star'*

Her favourites at the Pera were the Kütahya pottery and the Orientalist paintings. She also had a particular fondness for the voluminous figures of the modern Colombian artist Fernando Botero, whose work we exhibited in 2010. The cultural highlight of her year was an annual visit to the Louvre, where her husband took her every year until 2015.

It was her mother, Sadberk Hanım, who had nurtured her children's love of art and antiques. Suna Kıraç and her siblings, Rahmi Koç and Sevgi Gönül, have all created landmark museums.

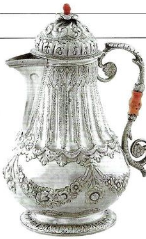
Suna Hanım's 35 years of training at the "university" of her father, Vehbi Koç, were tough, but she won his trust and became hugely successful, altering preconceptions both at work and at home. It must have been hard in the male-dominated working world of 1970s Turkey for a young woman – even Vehbi Koç's daughter – to be accepted and to drive through innovations. From the 1970s to the 1990s her stellar success provided hope and a role model for all Turkish women. Many were inspired to enter business and to strive to reach the higher levels.

Suna Kıraç's business and philanthropic responsibilities always took priority, which meant she spent less time with her family than she might have, until, eventually, she was forced to fight ALS. It was a fight that would last over two decades, during which she could only communicate with her eyes, guiding her family, her employees and all who loved her, like the North Star. She was a warrior, never giving up on her aims and ambitions.

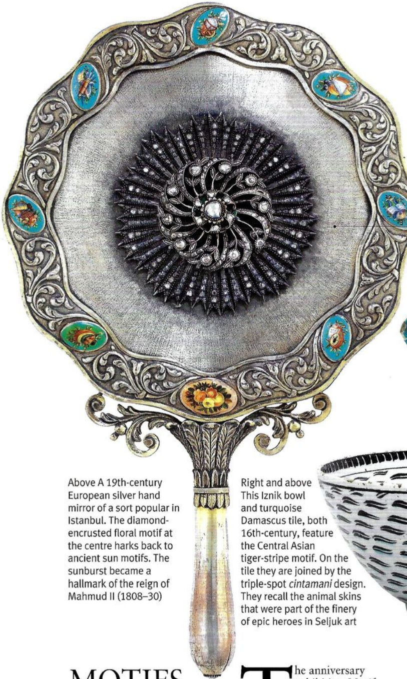
Paying posthumous tribute, İnan and İpek Kıraç said of Suna Hanım: "During these years, we came to realise how much of an iceberg she truly was. We were witnesses to how awake she was mentally… and how, despite all the difficulties involved, she managed to bring out her amazing gifts. Our love and respect for her grew daily."

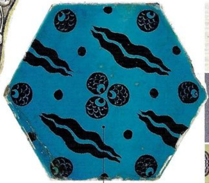
We bade farewell to this "Queen of the Amazons" on September 15, 2020, but she will eternally continue to shed light on our people and our country with her ideals, and to live in our hearts. ◆

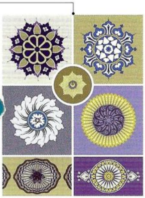
Özalp Birol is Director of the Pera Museum and on the board of the Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation; peramuseum.org

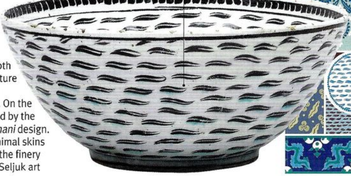


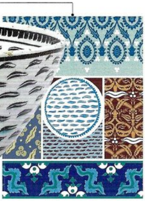
Right A repoussé silver coffee pot from the end of the 19th century, made in Turkey but of traditional European design with eclectic flourishes. The pear-shaped body is decorated with embellishments from the Ottoman Baroque; the Classical garlands have come a long way from the pagan altars of ancient times. The coral touches on the lid and ornate handle are a survival from earlier Islamic art











Above A 19th-century European silver hand mirror of a sort popular in Istanbul. The diamond-encrusted floral motif at the centre harks back to ancient sun motifs. The sunburst became a hallmark of the reign of Mahmud II (1808–30)

Right and above This Iznik bowl and turquoise Damascus tile, both 16th-century, feature the Central Asian tiger-stripe motif. On the tile they are joined by the triple-spot *cintamani* design. They recall the animal skins that were part of the finery of epic heroes in Seljuk art

VEHBI KOÇ FOUNDATION/SADBERK HANIM MUSEUM

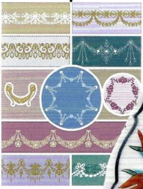
MOTIFS AND MOTIVES

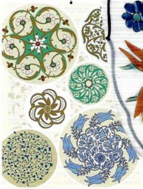
The Sadberk Hanim Museum, Istanbul's first private museum, marks its 40th anniversary with a show that looks into the meanings and origins of timeless graphic motifs. By Venetia Porter

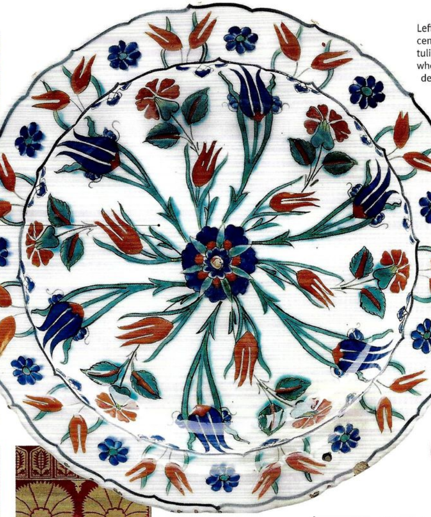
The anniversary exhibition *Motif* marks a milestone in the history of the Sadberk Hanım Museum, Turkey's first private museum, founded in October 1980 and named after the matriarch of the influential Koç family. For the past 40 years the museum, with its growing collections and exquisite exhibitions, has been at the heart of Istanbul's cultural scene. As Hülya Bilgi, the director, notes, museums are "places that participate in life rather than being static".

Ömer Koç, Sadberk Hanım's grandson, writes in his foreword to the magnificent book accompanying the exhibition, which has parallel texts in Turkish and English, that the museum's raison d'être is to provide "today's visitors with the opportunity to learn about the Anatolian civilisations". *Motif* deploys the full range of the collections, from the Ancient world to the Ottoman era.

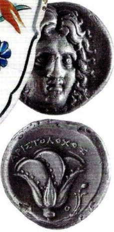
Motif invites us to explore these civilisations through the prism of ornament. In line with the museum's strong educational mission, the idea of both the show and the book is that objects serve as gateways into history and art, and the motifs drawn from them highlight artistry and technique, while tangibly demonstrating the effects of migration and diplomacy. Designs full of meaning in one culture take on new meanings in another. The rock-and-wave pattern on Yuan and Chinese Ming porcelains treasured by the Ottoman court, for example, became an integral motif of Iznik pottery, a foil to

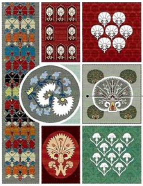






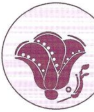
Left An exquisite 16th-century Iznik dish of swirling tulips and other flowers. The wheel-of-fortune (*çarkıfelek*) design, which gave rise to many variants including the Eurasian swastika, represents the idea of God spreading abundance through the sun. Here, delicate drawing meets Ottoman panache





Left A fanfare of carnations. War with the Safavids in the 1530s sparked a revolution in Ottoman design: out went Persian art's twiddly tendrils, in came bold flower heads. This voided velvet is 17th-century

Above right Struck in Rhodes, 275–250 BC, a silver didrachm bearing the sun god Helios and a rose, both emblems of the island. The rose is a universal symbol – in Islam to smell a rose is an act of piety



the glorious tulips and hyacinths of the "quatre fleurs" style.

This ambitious project, both the sumptuous exhibition and handsome book, was conceived by the art historian Turgut Saner to create "an explanatory visual panorama", and "to arouse curiosity", and was brought to fruition by the museum's director, Hülya Bilgi.

Inspired by Owen Jones's magisterial *The Grammar of Ornament*, published in 1856, but employing its own very different classifications, the curators isolated 500 motifs. These form the first half of the book, where they are grouped into five categories: "Life and Power", "Nature", "Figural Representation", "Order and Harmony" and "Space". Each motif has been most beautifully drawn by Ilgın Külekçi and Ediz Demirel. The groupings are then put into context by a series of informative essays.

The often complex motifs – especially those with a geometric base or intricate knot designs – stand out clearly and can be read and understood. Occasionally you might catch the artist having fun, for instance with the little figures on the ceramics of Kütahya.

The second part of the book is the catalogue of objects in the museum from which the designs have been derived. It exemplifies the wealth of raw material at the disposal of the curators and artists.

The Sadberk Hanım's publications offer much to both the scholar and the curious. *Motif* will also prove ideal for teachers showing children how to create the scrolling forms of an arabesque or the intricacies of a Chinese cloud band. Through these fascinating designs, it opens a window onto the breadth of Turkey's artistic traditions. ◆

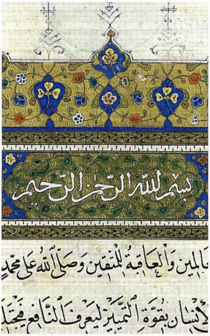
'Motif: From the Sadberk Hanım Museum Collection' is at the Sadberk Hanım Museum, Istanbul, until October 31. The companion book, by Turgut Saner, Şebnem Eryavuz and Hülya Bilgi, is available from cornucopia.net at £75

Venetia Porter is Curator, Islamic and Contemporary Middle East Art at the British Museum

THE ART OF LETTER WRITING

TIM STANLEY ON A CELEBRATION OF ŞEYH HAMDULLAH AND THE 500-YEAR-OLD CALLIGRAPHY TRADITION THAT ALMOST VANISHED

There is no doubt that Şeyh (Sheikh) Hamdullah is the most famous calligrapher in the Ottoman tradition, and there has long been a desire in Turkey to link him with Süleyman the Magnificent, the most famous ruler of the Empire. For this reason it is often said that he died *after* Süleyman's accession in 1520, although his demise probably took place a few years earlier. Over five centuries this difference has shrunk in importance, and so now we can celebrate the career of this great calligrapher that ended with his death roughly 500 years ago. In the face of

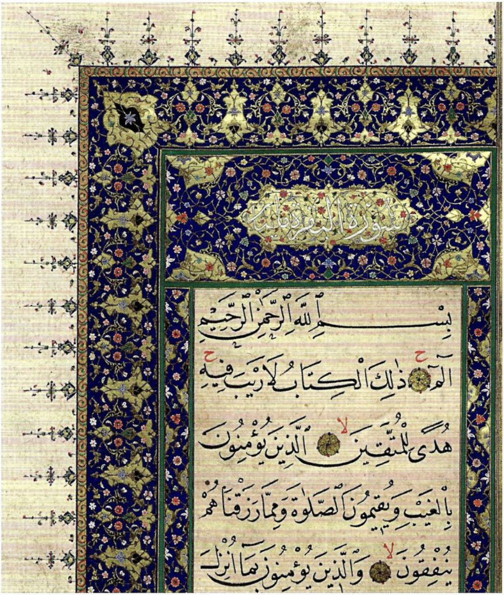

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

بالمين والعاقبة للمتقين وصلى الله على محمد

الانسان بقوة التمييز ليعرف النافع فيجتل

SÜLEYMANIYE YAZMA ESER KÜTÜPHANESI, AYASOFYA 3740

Above The illuminated first page from a landmark book on mental health, *Sustenance for Body and Soul* by Abu Zayd al-Balkhi (850–934). The manuscript was copied by Şeyh Hamdullah for Mehmed the Conqueror. It represents his style early in his career


بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

الم ذلك الكتاب لا ريب فيه

هدى للمتقين الذين يؤمنون

بالغيب ويقيمون الصلوة ومما رزقناهم

ينفقون والذين يؤمنون بما انزل

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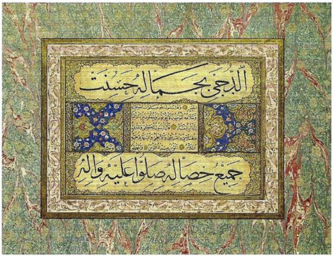
Above One of the magnificently illuminated opening pages of a famous Koran copied by Şeyh Hamdullah in his classical *nesih* style, preserved at Istanbul University. Elegantly restrained, *nesih* is admired for its precision, which is ideal for the rendition of the holy text: ambiguity is frowned on


الدجى بجماله حسنت

جميع خصاله صلوا عليه وآله

SAKIP SABANCI MUSEUM 120-0243

Left Much of Şeyh Hamdullah's work is preserved in collages known as *kıt'as* ('cuttings'). Here, fragments of calligraphy in different styles and examples of later illumination are framed by marbled paper (*ebru*) many difficulties, This task has been undertaken by the Sakıp Sabancı Museum in Istanbul, which houses a fine collection of Ottoman calligraphy.

A lot of pleasure can be gained from looking at a text copied by Şeyh Hamdullah. He wrote with elegance and precision, in a manner that still has strong echoes in the work of the best 20th-century Ottoman and then Turkish calligraphers. This might lead us to presume that he achieved dominance in his own lifetime, and that the school of Şeyh Hamdullah has prevailed in Turkey ever since. But the story is not so simple.

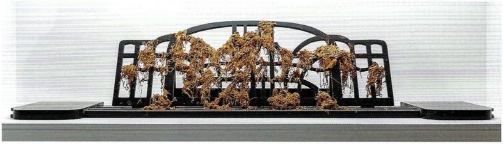
The Sheikh received commissions from sultans, and he certainly had disciples, often members of his family or of his own Sufi circle. But they worked on relatively modest projects, mainly producing copies of the Koran for patrons of middle rank. At the end of the 16th century, however, few students came forward to learn the elegant *nesih* used in Koran manuscripts, and the other schools of Turkish *nesih* vanished. Only the Sheikh's tradition survived into the 17th century, although it, too, came close to extinction.

Its survival cannot have been a matter of chance: in the early 17th century one or more calligraphers keen to revive *nesih* must have deliberately chosen to emulate his style, seeking out a teacher who could train them. They considered his *nesih* was best, and in that we can concur.

By the end of the 17th century, however, thanks to eminent calligraphers such as Derviş Ali and Hafız Osman, the Sheikh's style was practised to the exclusion of all others. This is why his tradition is central to the history of Ottoman calligraphy, and why understanding his work is key to appreciating collections such as that of the Sakıp Sabancı Museum. ◆

'Şeyh Hamdullah on the 500th Anniversary of his Death' is at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul, until March 31, sakipsabancimuzesi.org/en

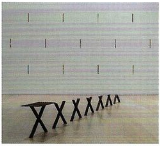
Tim Stanley is Senior Curator, Middle Eastern Collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum


FLUFOTO

SOUNDS OF SILENCE

As the American composer John Cage wrote, "There is no absolute silence." *For Eyes That Listen* invites visitors to Arter to imagine sounds evoked by 23 diverse works of art with musical connections from the institute's collection, selected by Melih Fereli. *Arter, Istanbul, until May 23, arter.org.tr*

Above and right Exhibits in *For Eyes That Listen* include *Sauerkraut Score*, 1969 (above), which shows Joseph Beuys' mischievous side, and *Whisper* (right), a 2010 installation of wooden stools by Füsun Onur, who will represent Turkey at the next Venice Biennale. It stands in front of Hreinn Fridfinnsson's *Suspended*, 2014


FLUFOTO

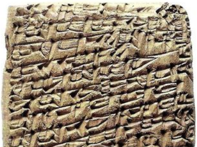
HADIYE CANGÖKÇE

SIMPLE MAGIC

"There is a magic to these pots," Alistair McAlpine wrote in these pages in 2002 after a visit to Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye's Paris studio. Two decades on, the Istanbul-born artist is still making pots in the same timeless idiom, sublimely simple, gravity-defying. Her current show, *Repetition*, takes its title from the work of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, the father of existentialism. "Repetition and recollection are the same movement, except in opposite directions," he wrote in 1843. Ebüzziya worked for a time in Denmark, where her subtle lines and glowing colours were influential. Her quest for the perfect pot began in the 1960s. "I am obsessional," she told McAlpine.
'Alev Ebüzziya Siesbye: Repetition', Arter, Istanbul, until March 7, arter.org.tr

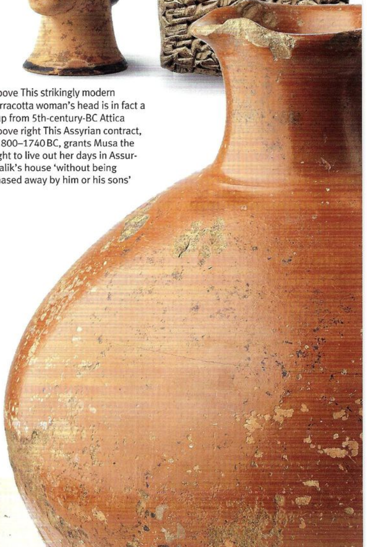
HADIYE CANGÖKÇE

Left and above Alev Ebüzziya's 2019 ceramics are monumental despite their modest size. The tall pot (left) is 36cm high, the bowl (above) 14cm wide. A clever distribution of weight is their secret



Above This strikingly modern terracotta woman's head is in fact a cup from 5th-century-BC Attica
Above right This Assyrian contract, c1800–1740 BC, grants Musa the right to live out her days in Assur-malik's house 'without being chased away by him or his sons'

PHOTOGRAPHS: SADBERK HANIM MUSEUM / VEHBI KOÇ FOUNDATION

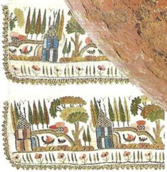


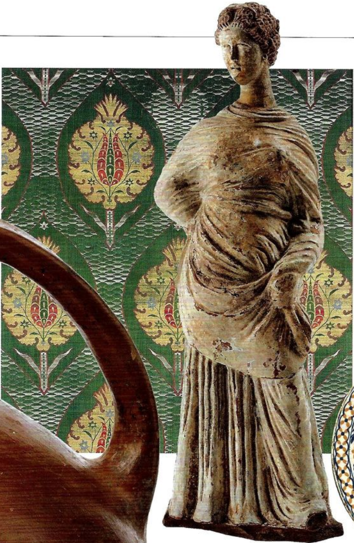
SADBERK HANIM'S GROWING LEGACY

An Aladdin's cave of prehistoric, Classical and Ottoman art, the Sadberk Hanım Museum is growing so fast that it will soon be moving from the Koç matriarch's summerhouse (top) to a purpose-built home on the Golden Horn. Priceless bequests such as wondrous antiquities, Josephine Powell's kilims and the Koç Iznik collection will then be displayed to true advantage.

Preserving the Past: A Selection from the Sadberk Hanım Museum (at Meşher, Beyoğlu, until Aug 1, mesher.org) is acting as a dress rehearsal for the new galleries – the catalogue is splendid. Sadberk Hanım's home, the old Azaryan Mansion, an eccentric building from the early 1900s, should now become what the city sorely needs: the first museum celebrating Ottoman design. You shouldn't have to visit Bulgaria to see authentic Ottoman interiors (see page 24).

Top The Sadberk Hanım Museum, a waterside house in Sarıyer bought by the Koç family in the 1950s
Above left The family matriarch, Sadberk Hanım, in the 1920s
Above Her daughter Sevgi Gönül, who fulfilled her mother's wish to turn the house into a museum
Right Embroidered 19th-century Ottoman napkin

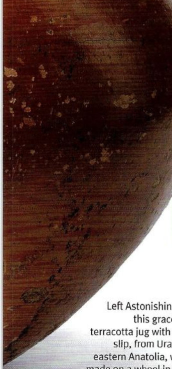




Left Hellenistic Tanagra figurine, early 3rd century BC Greece, striking a relaxed pose against a silk fragment of *kemha* weave, probably from palace workshops in Istanbul, second half of the 16th century. The medallions are a classic design of pomegranate and tulip

Below Çanakkale was an important centre for the production of ceramic household wares from the 18th to the early 20th century. This large shallow plate with its conservative decoration is typically 18th-century. Later designs are distinctly eccentric

Right Ottoman spoons for *hoşaf* (compote): 18th-century tortoiseshell with ivory and coral; and 19th-century abalone with coral

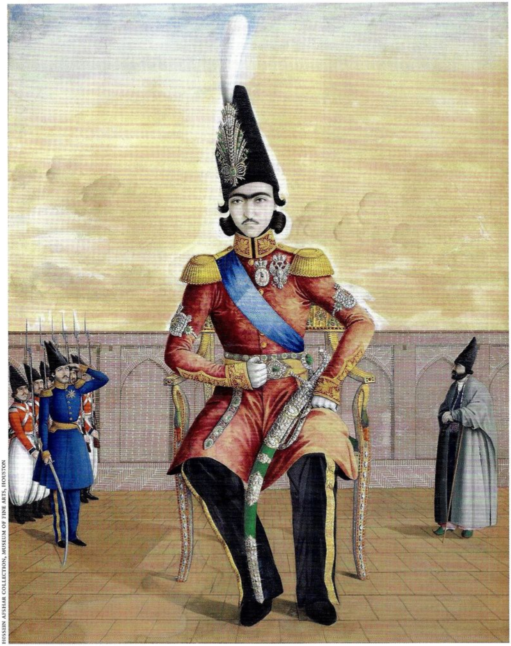


Left Astonishingly, this graceful terracotta jug with red slip, from Urartu, eastern Anatolia, was made on a wheel in the early 8th century BC

Above Mould-blown blue-green glass bowl from the turn of the 1st century BC. Glass was transformed in Roman times by new glass-blowing methods

Left Free-blown glass jug, 2nd century AD

Right 19th-century Beykoz glass jug with a striking striped design known as *çeşm-i bülbül*. The knob on the lid is in the form of a Mevlevi dervish cap



HOSSEIN AFSHAR COLLECTION, MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, HOUSTON

TEEN TITAN

This watercolour portrait of Nasir al-Din, Qajar Shah of Persia, aged just 17 and newly enthroned in 1848, is a highlight of the Atlanta exhibition *Bestowing Beauty: Masterpieces from Persian Lands* (The High Museum of Art, Atlanta, until April 18, high.org).

A carefully crafted image of a modern monarch in European-style uniform, the portrait conveys both earthly and divine authority: the Shah towers over his reforming prime minister Amir Kabir on the right.

Nasir al-Din reappears decades later, again in red uniform, in an 1870s oil painting (opposite) sold at Christie's London. The banquet in the Narenjestan (Orangery) at Tehran's Gulestan Palace made £540,000, four times its estimate, in the autumn Islamic and Indian Worlds sale.

The Turkic Qajar dynasty ruled Persia from 1789 to 1925. They were famed for their love of gardens and paintings, evident here in landscapes and portraits hung high above the long lines of guests bowing deeply to the Shah. The Narenjestan, with its dazzling chandeliers and citrus trees, was inspired by his visit to Versailles' Hall of Mirrors.

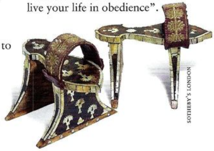
Left The Qajar Shah of Persia Nasir al-Din, watercolour, c1848
Opposite The Shah's banquet at the Gulestan Palace, Tehran, 1870–80, attributed to Yahya Ghaffari, one of a dynasty of Tehran artists
Below 17th-century women's hamam clogs, tortoiseshell inlaid with mother-of-pearl carnations
Far left 9th-century aquamarine chess piece, probably from Baghdad

KNIGHT'S TALE

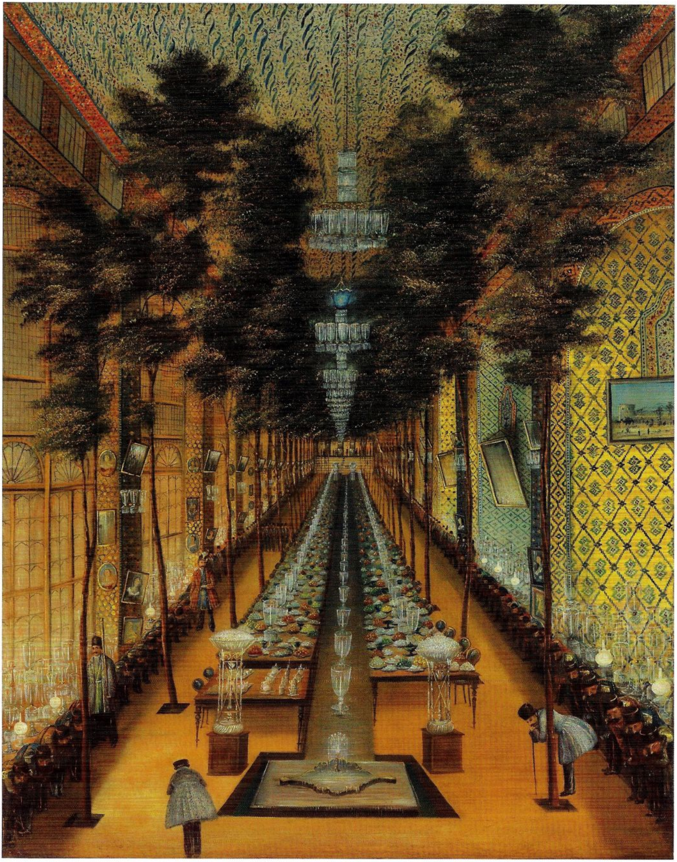
Between lockdowns London staged a memorable Islamic Sales Week in October. This exquisite aquamarine chess piece, thought to represent a knight, was lot 440 in Sotheby's Arts of the Islamic World and India sale. Just 4.5cm high, it may date to as early as the 9th century and perhaps graced a board in chess-mad Abbasid Baghdad. Carved in Iraq, Iran or Egypt, it sold for £50,400 on an estimate of £10,000–15,000.

Lot 479 in the same sale was a pair of 17th-century Ottoman hamam clogs (*naln*). Inlaid with tortoiseshell and mother-of-pearl, they are rare in retaining their original velvet-covered leather straps and made £18,400.

Pride of place at Sotheby's was to have been a splendidly sombre turban helmet, one of the "Select Works" from the LA Mayer Museum of Islamic Art in Jerusalem. A media storm postponed the entire deaccession sale. Made for the ruler of the Akkoyunlus, who rose to power in the 1300s in eastern Turkey and Iran, the helmet (est £400–600,000) is inscribed: "The world lasts but an hour so live your life in obedience".



SOTHEBY'S LONDON



CHRISTIE'S LONDON

Private view

Andrew Finkel has many a memory of a valued friendship, forged during his days at Robert Academy, where Minnie Garwood was a librarian. But the woman who invented the famous Hill Cocktail, the Bohemian expats' favourite tipple, was never one to live in the past

When it rains in Istanbul, it stands to reason that the droplets also fall in Feriköy. And yet, remarkably, on my rare visits to the Protestant graveyard in this downtown neighbourhood to bid old friends goodbye, I have never seen so much as a cloud. The sky sparkles, a blue off some French Impressionist's palette, and the green, uneven contours are gently unkempt. A contrast to the pin-neat Catholic cemetery across the way, where the plots are serried as if the departed have been recruited into some martial institution. I fool myself that I have stepped out of time, but the more probable explanation is that these grounds seem magical only because the streets on the other side of the high walls have frittered away their enchantment. It takes almost no effort to wish away the outside bustle and traffic and the careless post-war architecture and imagine oneself in a landscape that has always been there, or at least was there before the city came along.

The other day the sun shone as it is supposed to do as I paid my respects to someone I have known most of my life. Minnie Garwood was a person whose conversation I valued, whose company I enjoyed, and who came to represent in my imagination the caretaker of my own secret garden, which the years have overgrown.

To explain, I would have to go back to 1966, the year my family moved to Istanbul. I was one of the youngest to enrol in the boys' lycée, Robert Academy, which shared a campus with the university that was then called Robert College. With the advantage of having English as my native tongue, and being one of only a handful of foreigners, I was given more than a schoolboy's dose of liberty. I could pick and choose my classes – science with one year, French and German with the next – and escape into town to see a film in between. I felt extraordinarily free – all the more so for being able to fit in with the expatriate teaching staff, some of whose children were my friends.

Many of them lived on the rise beyond what was called "the Bowl", a shallow valley beside the college campus, peppered with high-ceilinged wooden houses with majestic views of the Bosphorus at its most scenic bend. Minnie was the librarian at a junior school for the faculty children and for those of what at the time was a small expat community. David, her husband, had been a professor of humanities at Robert College since 1939, responsible for recruiting many of his fellow academics, and talking John Freely, whom he met in 1960 on a Princeton sabbatical, into moving his family to Istanbul instead of accepting a research position in the physics department.

John, of course, became the great chronicler of post-war Istanbul. It was he who credited Minnie, in his memoir, *Stamboul Ghosts*, with the invention of the Hill Cocktail, a dangerous libation which fuelled the excesses of the college crowd, an all too literal community spirit distilled from the pure ethanol alcohol sold by the state liquor monopoly. It was a privileged sort of Bohemia, perched above the 15th-century fortress of Rumeli Hisarı, inhabited by people for whom time stood still, who welcomed the young James Baldwin to their parties, and who had an inkling that they were the luckiest people alive.

Minnie was a person whose conversation I valued, whose company I enjoyed, and who came to represent in my imagination the caretaker of my own secret garden, which the years have overgrown

Though I only lived in Istanbul that one year, I found excuses to come back on my school holidays and was later to become a resident of Rumelihisarı, teaching at what had become the Bosphorus University, in the very same classrooms I had sat in as a schoolboy. The community I first knew began to disperse over time. Those wonderful houses skyrocketed in value, became just too valuable to remain as faculty housing and were sold off. People moved away and some of them moved on to recreate their fellowship in the northernmost corner of the Feriköy graveyard.

Minnie was someone I got to know over the years, although she was discreetly absent when I attended, age 16, my first all-night party at her home, given by her daughter Ann. She was a regular at the Christmas Day brunches given by Joanne Greenwood, the mother of another school friend. Minnie's English was perfect, albeit with a slightly eccentric, over-modulated tone, her name suggestive of good New England stock. So I am not sure when it was that I realised Minnie was short for Armine, that she was not an expat but had been born and raised in Rumelihisarı by Ottoman Armenian parents. Her father, Kaspar Tüygil, was librarian at Robert College for over 50 years and her mother, Armenuhi, matron of the college dormitory. She was part of a community that existed before the others arrived.

Minnie was full of insight about the present and never a great one, at least in my hearing, for reliving the past. We did sit down, years ago now, when she told me some stories of her life. I remember her relating her shock as a schoolgirl being forced to leave the cocoon of the college community in Rumelihisarı to attend compulsory state education in Turkish. This meant travelling all the way to Ortaköy – all of four miles away. But of course she was born in 1926 (when the population of Istanbul was fewer than 700,000, compared to today's official tally of over 15 million), and work on the coastal road along Rumelihisarı only began in 1939. Her description of a young primary schoolgirl's trek to the tram stop in Bebek was of journeying into a foreign land.

When I heard of her death, the first thing that popped into my mind was a photo I had taken – at a remembrance event for John Freely, as it happens. Minnie was in her 90s and my daughter not yet 30. Both were laughing uproariously. I sent it to Izzy in memoriam, only to receive by immediate reply her photo from the same occasion. This time it was me talking to Minnie – both of us laughing our heads off, Minnie doubled back in mirth at some joke I will never remember.

I am forever suspicious of sentences that begin "There are two types of people..." but I do begin to wonder if there are not two ways to live in the city of Istanbul. The first in an eternal present without blinking at the pace of change; the second, to remember what came before and what came before that. I know Buddhists go to graveyards to experience their own mortality. Only in Istanbul do you walk among the headstones to see what was always there. ◆

Armine 'Minnie' Garwood née Tüygil, born Istanbul, 1926; died Istanbul, 2020

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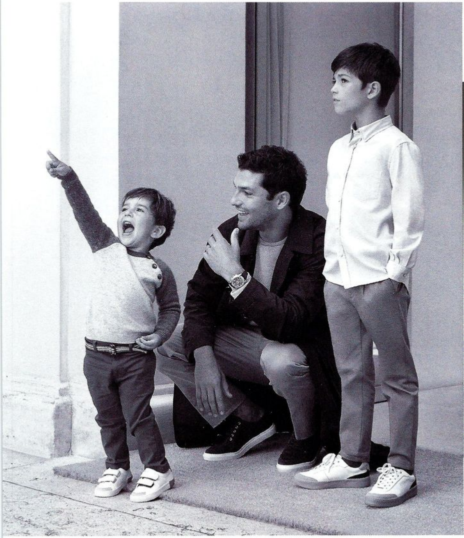

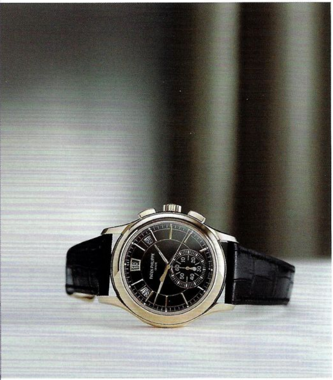

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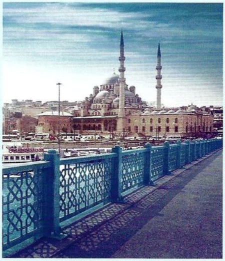

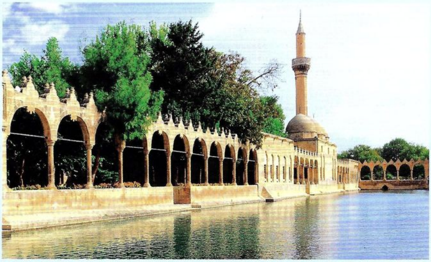

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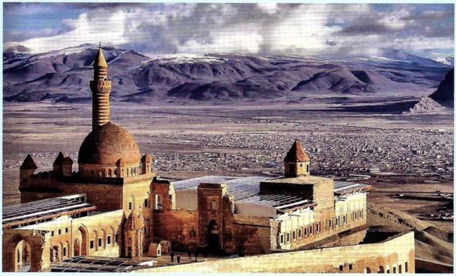

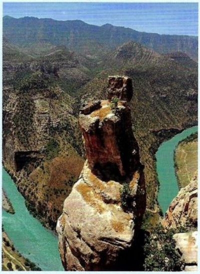

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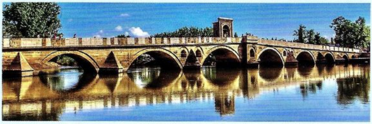

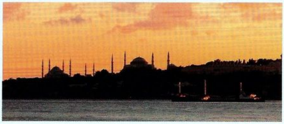

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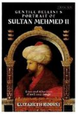
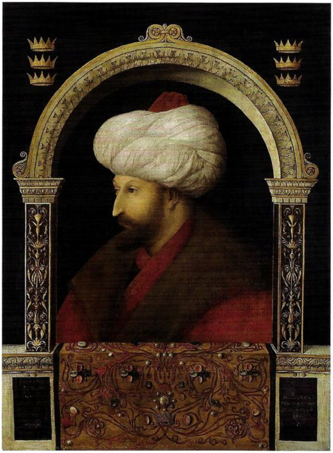
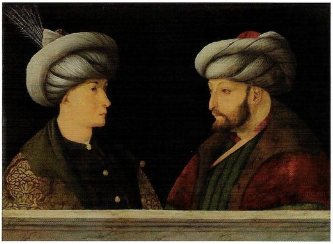


Elizabeth Rodini's thoughtful account traces the circuitous journey made by the portrait of Mehmed the Conqueror by Gentile Bellini that now belongs to the National Gallery in London (above right). Across 400 years it has travelled from Istanbul to London and, temporarily, back again to Istanbul, with stays in Venice and elsewhere.

The book fortuitously coincides with the Istanbul Municipality's purchase of a related picture (right) in June 2020. Istanbul's acquisition portrays two people, one based on Gentile's image of Mehmed (though it is uncertain whether the National Gallery's portrait was the sole source or whether other images were involved).



NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON



CHRISTIE'S LONDON

TOP GENTILE BELLINI'S 'MEHMED THE CONQUEROR', THE SUBJECT OF RODINI'S BOOK. THE LIKENESS, WITH ITS SLIGHTLY TURNED POSE, DATES FROM BELLINI'S STAY AT THE TOPKAPI IN 1480–81
RIGHT THE RELATED PORTRAIT WITH AN UNKNOWN SITTER, RECENTLY PURCHASED BY THE ISTANBUL MUNICIPALITY

Rodini's methods will be useful tools for excavating the Istanbul work's probably very different history. It is unlikely, however, that its story will be as rich or colourful as the one she tells about the London portrait. Rodini first saw the portrait in 2003, when it was stored with problematic paintings in the basement of the National Gallery. In this context its defects were obvious. The figure of Mehmed was almost entirely repainted: "his face hazy and his form lost under a bundle of ill-fitting clothes". The absence of Gentile's characteristic linear precision raised doubts that this was the portrait he painted in Istanbul in 1480. Gentile's "sharp edge of observation" was visible in the painted frame and textile ledge-cover, however, and modern imaging technology proved that the current surface follows Gentile's outlines for the figure and the inscription, affirming the picture's identity.

In 2008 it was transferred to the Victoria and Albert Museum and hung in a gallery dedicated to cross-cultural exchange, which emphasised its value as a historical document.

Believing that Gentile's artistry had been worn away as the painting moved in space and time, Rodini set out to tell the story of this journey. Because evidence is missing for some of its stops, she explored their historical contexts. She explains her methodology in detail and recognises that she became personally immersed in sometimes wandering side-trips.

Her account of the portrait's creation in Istanbul moves quickly through the facts. Responding to the Sultan

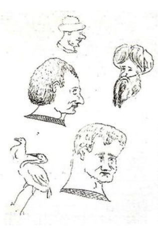
Mehmed's request for a skilled portraitist during critical peace negotiations in 1479, the Venetian senate rapidly dispatched their state painter.

Gentile was a valuable diplomatic gift, bringing his abilities to glorify the Sultan and his power in the most up-to-date European style. He produced a profile bust on undated bronze medals – or at least a drawing for it – and a nearly life-sized, slightly turned, painted bust that conveyed a more convincing presence.

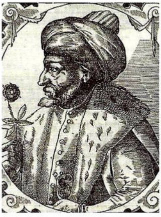
Gentile also took with him an album of drawings on vellum by his late father, Jacopo, intended as a tool for study and teaching. It reflected current Venetian concerns: the realistic depiction of people and animals, narrative composition and, above all, carefully demarcated space and perspective.

Rodini emphasises that Gentile acquired rare access to private spaces in Topkapı Palace, where he engaged with Mehmed, examining and probably discussing objects in the royal treasury and Jacopo's sketchbook, and studying people who attracted Mehmed's attention. Rodini sites Gentile's surviving drawings of the latter as evidence of his access to the court and exposure to Oriental art there.

Her analysis of the resulting effects of these encounters on Gentile's painting skirts around the discrepancy between what Mehmed probably valued in Gentile's art and what remains of Gentile's painting itself. A page from Mehmed's own youthful sketchbook in the Topkapı (above right) is evidence of the Sultan's interest in verisimilitude and linear description.



TOPKAPI PALACE MUSEUM LIBRARY



Above The Conqueror's interest in drawing is shown in a page from his own youthful sketchbook
Below left An engraving of a portrait belonging to the historian and collector Paolo Giovio, published in 1575. The London portrait had vanished from public view

Gentile's paintings in Venice show his sharp delineation, even transcription of surfaces and unselective topographical approach to composition. This was his version of the Venetian "eyewitness" style and testifies to his work's truthfulness. Rodini contends that Mehmed wanted Gentile's portrait to demonstrate an Italian art form, not what a Turk actually looked like. Yet we do not know how Mehmed intended to use the work or whether he was satisfied with it, because he dismissed Gentile shortly after the date on the painting and died soon thereafter.

After those events in 1481, the historical record ceases until the picture is documented in Venice in 1865. For religious reasons, Mehmed's successor, Bayezid II, reportedly sent all of his father's paintings to the bazaar, where Gentile's portrait may have been purchased by a Venetian merchant or traveller. An unverifiable report published in 1648 mentions that the portrait (supposedly brought back by Gentile himself) was in the home of Pietro Zen.

Rodini uses the Zens as stand-ins for likely owners in the Venetian cultural context: a rich mercantile family who would display Gentile's painting in their palazzo's *portego*, or reception hall, to be admired by visitors. It was little known to the public, however.

Rodini disproves the humanist Paolo Giovio's claim that the image of Mehmed in his famous portrait collection, installed in his villa in Como during the 1540s and illustrated in a publication of 1575 (below left), was copied from Gentile's. In 1578, when Ottoman officials sought reliable models for an illustrated history of the sultans from the Venetian government, none could be found. To save the city's reputation as an art repository, the Senate had the workshop of Paolo Veronese create a set.

The acquisition of Gentile's portrait in 1865 by the British archaeologist and diplomat Austin Henry Layard most engages Rodini. She takes us to his excavations of Mesopotamian antiquities, his chance purchase of the Gentile in Venice, the display of his antiquities and paintings in London, visits to the sultan at Topkapı as British ambassador, and his retirement in Venice, where he transferred his collection. She describes Layard admiring Gentile's painting on an easel in the main hall of his palace – just where the Zens might have placed it – and seeing something of himself in the artist's travels and experiences in Istanbul.

Layard had the canvas relined and its surface "treated" twice to improve its appearance. Despite obvious differences, he linked his image with Paolo Giovio's in order to give it an old provenance that would give it higher priority than other (unspecified) portraits of Mehmed which had no history. Rodini cites another painting, now in Doha, Qatar, to show that Gentile's painting had become an authoritative prototype by about 1510. The Istanbul Municipality's probably earlier (and less faded?) double portrait should be considered in this context.

Rodini turns to legal documents to land Gentile's portrait in the National Gallery in London. Layard had willed "all [his] pictures (except portraits)" to the gallery. Over the five years following the death of his widow, Enid, a series of obstacles were resolved through hair-splitting debates over the meaning of terms: "art", "history", "heirloom" and, finally, "portrait".

Rodini concludes with an insightful discussion of the painting's recent "afterlives" in Istanbul. In 1999 a commercial bank negotiated its brief loan for an exhibition commemorating the 700th anniversary of the Ottoman Empire. Over 30,000 came to visit the Conqueror, seen to embody Ottoman history and much of Turkish identity. The presence of the famous Venetian portrait seemed to augur a new Golden Age, in which Turkey could hold its own in relation to European civilisation.

Gentile's painting soon returned to Istanbul for a larger exhibition at the Topkapı in 2000, celebrating its contribution to the tradition of Ottoman imperial portraiture. These expressions of cultural pride coincided with the launch of Turkey's candidacy for the European Union.

When Rodini visited Istanbul in 2018, opinion of Gentile's image had changed, along with failing hopes of joining the EU and rising nationalism. Nostalgia for the illustrious past and traditional values had led to a "Neo-Ottomanism". Visual symbols asserted faith, independence and strong rule: headscarves, the revival of Ottoman institutional names and architectural styles, and state-supported restoration of Ottoman monuments. Rodini caps her journey at Istanbul's new Panorama 1453 History Museum outside the city walls, where a huge photo of the head of Gentile's Fatih is poised at the entrance to witness a re-enactment of his victory. ◆

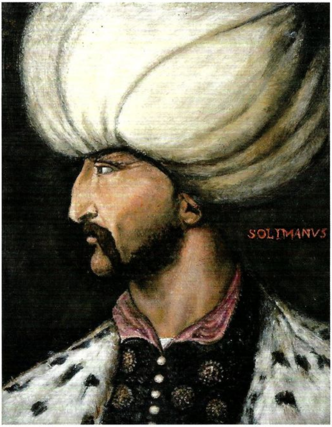
Rosamond E Mack is an art historian best known for her book 'Bazaar to Piazza: Islamic Trade and Italian Art, 1300–1600'

- *For Gentile Bellini's Istanbul drawings, see 'A Bellini for the Sultan' by Rosamond E Mack in* CORNUCOPIA 54

... AND A MAGNIFICENT SÜLEYMAN

Julian Raby

A newly discovered 16th-century painting of Süleyman the Magnificent, due to be sold by Sotheby's London this spring, is arguably the most 'immediate' portrait of him until the last years of his life. This is Süleyman in his pomp



SOTHEBY'S LONDON

Just over 50 years after Gentile Bellini produced what has now become the iconic image of Mehmed the Conqueror, another set of exchanges between the Serenissima and the Sublime Porte led to the canonical image of his descendant Süleyman the Magnificent in his middle years.

A newly found version of this likeness (top and No 3, far right) shows Süleyman The Lawgiver – "Kanuni Süleyman", as Turks know him (1494–1566) – allegedly at the age of 43. This was about the time he conquered Iraq from the Safavids of Iran and roundly defeated the fleet assembled by the Pope and his allies at the Battle of Preveza.

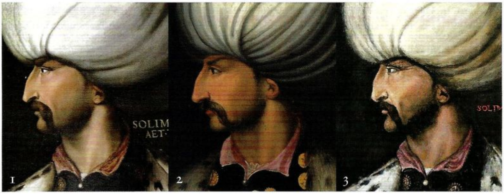
The painting is not inscribed with his age, but relates directly to two other examples that are. One, now in the Uffizi in Florence (No 1, right), was copied for Cosimo de' Medici some time between 1552 and 1568. The other (above, No 2) was copied for the Habsburg Archduke Ferdinand II of Austria between 1578 and 1599 to hang at Schloss Ambras in Innsbruck. It is now in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna.

Both versions were copied directly from a painting owned by Paolo Giovio, a humanist and historian, whose collection of more than 400 portraits, most with commentaries on the life and achievements of the person portrayed, was the *locus classicus* for Renaissance historical portraiture. In the only other known painting at the age 43, the Sultan wears an earring (mucem.org/media/3427). This flaccid derivative was installed by Paul Ardier, former treasurer to Henri IV of France, in the portrait gallery he assembled from 1617 to 1638 at the Château de Beauregard, near Blois.

The Sotheby's painting, perhaps more vividly than any of the other known versions, captures the way Süleyman was described by a member of a Venetian delegation to Istanbul in 1534 – large black eyes, more compassionate than cruel, an aquiline nose slightly too large for his other features, a beard not shaven but cut close with scissors, long, red moustaches, and a long and slender neck.

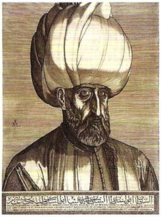
It conveys Süleyman's acuity more forcefully than the other examples. In colouring and brushwork it is more Venetian than the Uffizi version, the smoothness of which betrays the fact that the painter, Cristofano dell'Altissimo, had worked under Pontormo and Bronzino. Ardier's version lacks presence and suffuses Süleyman in an orange glow eerily reminiscent of a recent US President.

Intriguingly, in the treatment of Süleyman's nose the Sotheby's painting differs from the Uffizi version and comes closer to the Ambras version. Yet it is not derived from the Ambras portrait, as it lacks the meretricious addition of the ruffled edge of Süleyman's chemise. It must, then, be independently connected to Giovio's painting, though when and how remains to be established. Unusually, the



1 GALLERIE DEGLI UFFIZI 2 KHM-MUSEUMSVERBAND 3 SOTHEBY'S LONDON

The faces of Süleyman II at 43 Main image and No 3, above The vibrant new find, on sale at Sotheby's London, March 31 (oil on copper, 23 x 17.5cm). No 1 The newly restored Uffizi portrait, 1552–68, attributed to Cristofano dell' Altissimo (oil on panel, 58 x 45cm) No 2 Archduke Ferdinand II's smaller portrait, 1578–99, painted in oil on paper pasted on panel (13.6 x 10.7 cm)



Left A careworn Süleyman in old age, c1559, in an engraving of Melchior Lorck's portrait

STATE MUSEUM FOR ART, COPENHAGEN

Sotheby's version is painted on copper. This lends it great vibrancy, but, in an Italian context, suggests a date in the late 16th or early 17th century.

Sotheby's painting also opens a window onto a narrative of artistic exchanges between Venice and the Ottomans in the 1530s. The story involves the crown that Süleyman purchased from Venetian craftsmen, which combined Papal tiara and military helmet in a symbolism referencing both the Pope and the Holy Roman Emperor. The crown looks phantasmagorical in depictions, but it was real, as is the likeness of Süleyman.

The threads of the story extend in numerous directions: to the presence in Istanbul of a Venetian painter about whom, unlike Gentile Bellini, we know little; to the portraits of Süleyman that Titian produced for the Duke of Mantua in 1538 and for the Duke of Urbino in 1539; to the family tradition that Giovio received a portrait of Süleyman directly from the Sultan himself; to portraits owned by Giovio of several of Süleyman's military commanders, notably the admirals Hayreddin "Barbarossa" Pasha and Sinan Pasha; and to the role of another captain, Haydar Reis, known as "Nigari" ("The Painter"), in linking the Ottoman and European traditions of Ottoman imperial portraiture. But all this is a longer tale to tell. The focus for now is on Süleyman at the age of 43.

Julian Raby has a long-held interest in Ottoman art and has written on a variety of subjects, including the artistic patronage of Mehmed the Conqueror, Iznik pottery and the collecting of Chinese porcelains at the Ottoman court

- *Further reading: 'The Sultan's Portrait: Picturing the House of Osman', published in 2000 by Türkiye İş Bankası, Istanbul, in conjunction with an exhibition at the Topkapı in the same year*

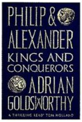
A fuller version of this article will feature in a future issue of CORNUCOPIA

RIGHT ROYAL DOUBLE ACT

Barnaby Rogerson

PHILIP AND ALEXANDER
Kings and Conquerors

Adrian Goldsworthy
Head of Zeus, 2020, £35



This is fluent, page-turning narrative history. It chronicles a father-and-son double act like no other. Philip created a kingdom, while his son Alexander (the pupil of Aristotle) expanded it into the world's largest empire with a ten-year war and a 10,000-mile odyssey. When I finished this 620-page brick of a book, I simply wanted more.

Goldsworthy wins the reader's trust by pursuing a firm structure of probable fact. He picks the flesh of legends clean off the bone, scouring away at myths and boiling off academic debates and conspiracy theories. This is an endless task, for the worldwide popularity and ancient dissemination of the *Alexander Romance*, in dozens of different languages, provided an international reservoir of myth. And any reader already interested in the era is likely to have had their imagination coloured by the historical fictions of Mary Renault.

But in this book the author looks the reader straight in the eye and confesses when we cannot know more, and that however passionate our desire to see the past through our enriched understanding of gender, ethnicity and climatic determinants, these modern prisms are likely to obscure, rather than elucidate, the true order of events.

Even on his home ground of military history, Goldsworthy repeatedly reminds us that grand strategies are formulated in retrospect, and that campaigns are dictated by responding to the pressing tide of events. There are moments when the reader might yearn for a little more colour, fuelled by personal research into landscape, surviving fragments of architecture and the chance finds of archaeology, but Goldsworthy's discipline holds true. For even the rivers that formed the front lines of ancient battlefields have since changed their course. The only fantasy he allows himself is to create detailed maps of the deployment of divisions on the eve of each major battle.

Goldsworthy also keeps us on the narrow track of the handful of primary textual sources – the self-serving rhetoric of Demosthenes and the histories of Arrian, Plutarch, Diodorus Siculus, Justin and Quintus Curtius Rufus. These historians are unpacked a bit, so we get a glimpse at the possible primary sources they themselves fed off, but we are always reminded that this is all we have, unless some rubbish heap reveals papyrus fragments from these lost scrolls. Which chapters by which of these authors have survived is also the work of random chance, not rational curatorship.

Arrian might have modestly prefaced his account: "You may wonder why I am writing another book on Alexander the Great when there have been so many already," yet it is his account (written 450 years after the events he describes) which is now our central text. He at least knew the ground well, for Lucius Flavius Arrianus was born in northwestern Turkey (in the Bithynian city of Nicodemia – modern İzmit) and served as governor in Cappadocia for six years. Arrian was inspired by Xenophon's *Anabasis* (what better role model could anyone aspire to?) and probably had a particular reader in mind, the Emperor Hadrian, when he wrote his history.

The universe that Goldsworthy ultimately paints for us is undeniably harsh, if not Darwinian, in its competitive savagery. In the 4th century BC Macedonia became a military state out of necessity, its very existence threatened by the predatory nature of two martial neighbours, Illyria to the west and the tribes of Thrace to the east. Macedonia had no citizen army of hoplite infantry for the simple reason that it had no independent-minded cities of its own, for the prosperous coastal region with its harbours, trading concessions and the mine workings was in the hands of the Athenians, still then in possession of a world-class navy. Instead, the strength of the kingdom was based on cavalry, an army recruited through aristocratic clans from the fertile valleys of upper and lower Macedonia. These gentlemen lived to hunt, to drink and to fight, but in 360BC they were overwhelmed by an Illyrian invasion which killed 4,000 warriors alongside their king, Perdicas III of Macedonia.

This catastrophe allowed King Philip to inherit the throne. He was faced with a simple challenge: conquer your enemies or you, your family and your kingdom will perish. His long reign reads like a continuous lesson in leadership and especially in the arts of diplomacy, of turning conquered enemies into hard-working allies. He created a professional army which was capable of taking on all sorts of adversaries: the hoplite armies of central Greece, the nomadic cavalry of Thrace, tough highland clans as well as well-defended walled cities along the coast.

This multiplicity of enemies meant that the Macedonian army seldom operated as a single force for long, but was used to working as small, highly mobile units under junior commanders. German historians in the 19th century (led by Johann Droysen) lovingly observed the methodical rise to power of Macedonia, which had so many parallels with Prussia. So Goldsworthy is following a well-established tradition in giving much of the credit for Alexander's conquests to King Philip. He had created an army that could take on any enemy, anywhere, simultaneously operating on half a dozen fronts. He had also established a bridgehead at the Gallipoli crossing into Asia Minor when he was murdered.

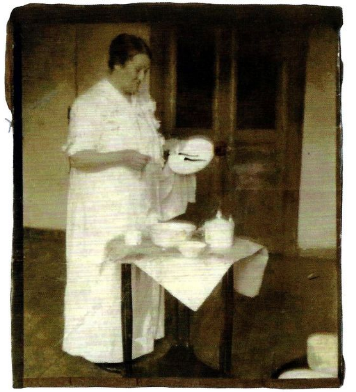
Alexander's contribution was to lead from the front, spurred on by a barely credible aggression and a relentless murderous energy. His claim to be leading a war of revenge on behalf of Greece (160 years after the sack of Athens) was never credible. Macedonia had in fact been the trusted regional ally of the Persian Empire throughout this long period.

We have become so used to our monarchs presiding over their courts – to dysfunctional Bourbons, inbred Habsburgs and fat Hanoverians – that the idea of an army being led into battle by a fit and charismatic young warrior king is totally outside our experience. As Goldsworthy shows us, we are fortunate.

The decade of conquest unleashed by Alexander was a horrific experience for the civilised world. The only useful parallels to both the rapidity and violence of his conquests are with Genghis Khan and Tamburlane. When he had finally secured the eastern frontier of the old Persian Empire, he then purged his own army in a series of torture-fed treason trials, while planning a new war, on the southern frontier, into Arabia.

When Alexander died, the monstrously efficient and murderous army that his father had created turned in on itself. Goldsworthy teaches us that this was not a tragedy, but an inevitability.

Barnaby Rogerson is the author of 'In Search of Ancient North Africa: A History in Six Lives' (Haus £20), available at £15.99 post-free to Cornucopia subscribers (cornucopia.net/ancientnorthafrica)

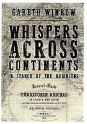


HERE'S TO YOU, MRS ROBINSON

David Barchard

WHISPERS ACROSS CONTINENTS
In Search of the Robinsons

Gareth Winrow
Amberley, Stroud, 2020, £20



GARETH WINROW
WHISPERS
ACROSS
CONTINENTS
IN SEARCH OF THE ROBINSONS

One day in around 1891, Hannah Robinson, a working-class British widow from London's East End, married a man whom she supposed was called Gholab Shah, though he was actually an unpleasant Indian fraudster and bigamist, Eliahi Bosche.

Hannah had six children from a previous marriage, but she and they somehow converted to Islam. Hannah became Fatima, and was married according to Muslim law. The religious ceremonies were presumably overseen by Abdullah Quilliam, a Liverpool solicitor and convert. A figure of some note, today regarded as the founder of British Islam, Quilliam was certainly the only British *şeyhülislam* (grand mufti) ever to be appointed by an Ottoman sultan.

Fatima, most of her children and her new husband then moved to Istanbul. The marriage quickly broke down completely and very bitterly. Without friends or resources, she threw herself on the mercy of the Ottoman palace, and did indeed receive help from Abdülhamid II. When she died in Izmir in 1948, Fatima was the matriarch of a family with branches in Britain, the US, Turkey and Germany. Two sons had helped establish football in Turkey (originally banned for Muslims). Two had died fighting for the Ottoman army in the First World War, one in eastern Anatolia after both his feet were amputated owing to frostbite. Another arranged the first-ever international basketball match in Turkey (with an American team in 1921).

ABOVE HANNAH (FATIMA) ROBINSON AT HOME IN IZMIR
RIGHT HER SON AHMET (IN WHITE), GOALKEEPER FOR GALATASARAY, WHEN THEY WON THE ISTANBUL LEAGUE IN 1908–09

And yet, with their obvious foreign lineage, none of the sons was entirely trusted. Ahmet, the most prominent, "lived and worked for many years in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, but was viewed as a foreigner by some people in positions of authority," writes Winrow. This perhaps was why he migrated to America for his final 35 years.

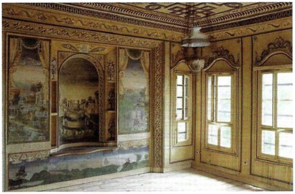
There was a large and often quite distinguished British community in Istanbul in the late 19th century. Most were fairly posh scions of empire, and the actor Benedict Cumberbatch is one well-known descendant. The story of the "Robensons" (as the sons became known) is one of the strangest and most intricate tales, and all the more impressive because Hannah and her children had nothing – except for the talent of her sons as outstanding sportsmen.

Readers should be warned that the book contains a blizzard of family details. The quest to rediscover lives that ended a century ago often throws up loose ends. But it is difficult not to applaud a massive yet sensitive investigation by a meticulous researcher whose exceptional background knowledge of late-Ottoman and Republican Turkish history has rescued a vast and far-flung family from oblivion. It shows how they did, and did not, fit into their adopted country and helped to bequeath its most famous football club, Galatasaray. ◆

Tribute to David Barchard, a CORNUCOPIA *founding contributor, who died on Christmas Day, 2020, p146*

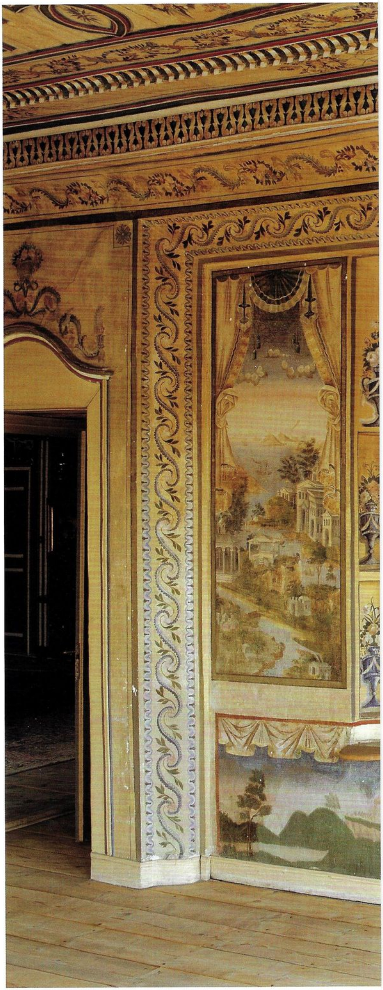
ARCHITECTURE

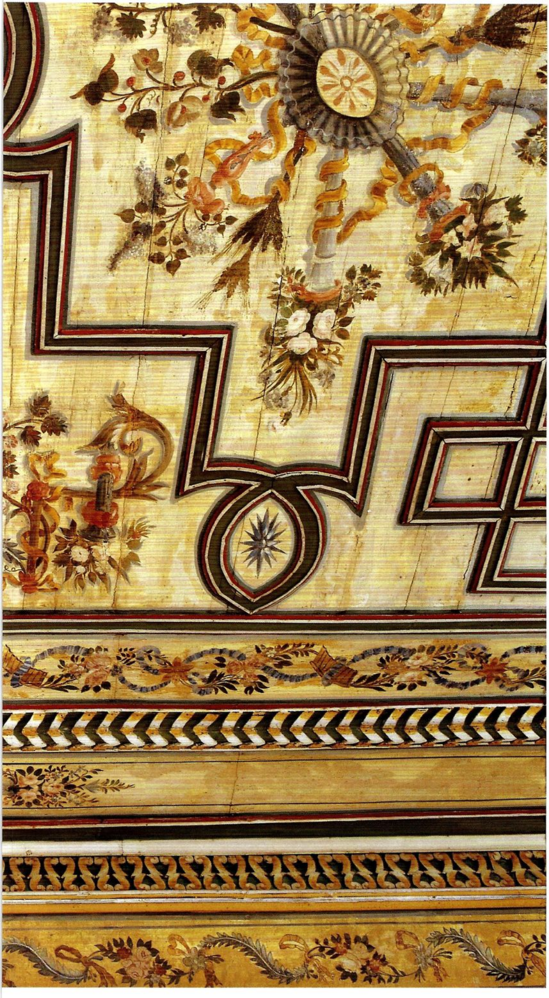
LIVING THE OTTOMAN DREAM



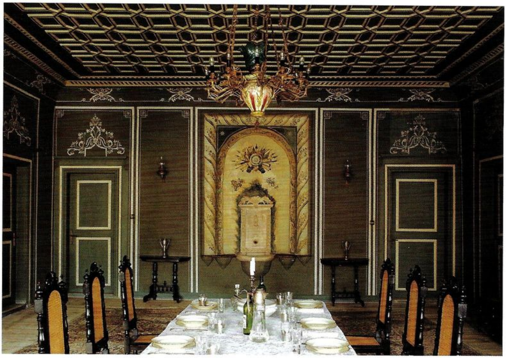
For Ottoman interiors at their luminous best, the Balkans are the place to go. In 2004 Berrİn Torolsan discovered old Fİlİbe, today's Bulgarian city of Plovdiv, recently a European Capital of Culture. In this sleepy backwater she stepped into an Ottoman time warp, the enchanting House of Hindliyan. Photographs by Tim Beddow

Plovdiv's old Ottoman quarter is remarkably well preserved. Now a museum, the house of the Ottoman Armenian merchant Stephan Hindliyan was built between 1835 and 1840, some say as a dowry for his daughter. Lit from windows on all four walls, this grand corner bedroom is on the first floor. The murals reflect the family's wide business interests, with fanciful views of St Petersburg, Venice, Stockholm, Rome, Bombay and other cities





The same bedroom's painted ceiling reflects the taste of the haute bourgeoisie in 19th-century Plovdiv: an elaborate trompe l'oeil is embellished with peonies, tulips, ears of wheat, and garlands of serrated leaves. When the house was restored in 1974, seven layers of paint were painstakingly removed to reveal its many frescoes



LIVING THE OTTOMAN DREAM

Opposite The first-floor 'sofa', or reception room, became a formal dining room for later members of the family. They installed European furniture, but at heart it remains a light and airy Ottoman 'hayat' – in summer the huge windows looking on to the courtyard were thrown open to turn the room into a terrace cooled by mountain breezes

Above right The gilded lattice ceiling and customary marble fountain, which once ran with rosewater. Above it is an armorial motif popular in the reign of Mahmud II, who was sultan when the house was built

Evliya Çelebi was a genius of a travel writer. For more than 30 years in the 17th century this courtier to the Ottoman sultan Murad IV travelled tirelessly, from the Caspian Sea to the Baltic, from Damascus to the Hook of Holland, Moldavia to Ethiopia. His ten-volume diary is an invaluable record. He was both witty and observant, full of curiosity and adventure, and a daring horseman. While playing jereed, a game that involved hurling a baton at close range at a fellow rider, he twice had his teeth broken, later having them repaired in Vienna.

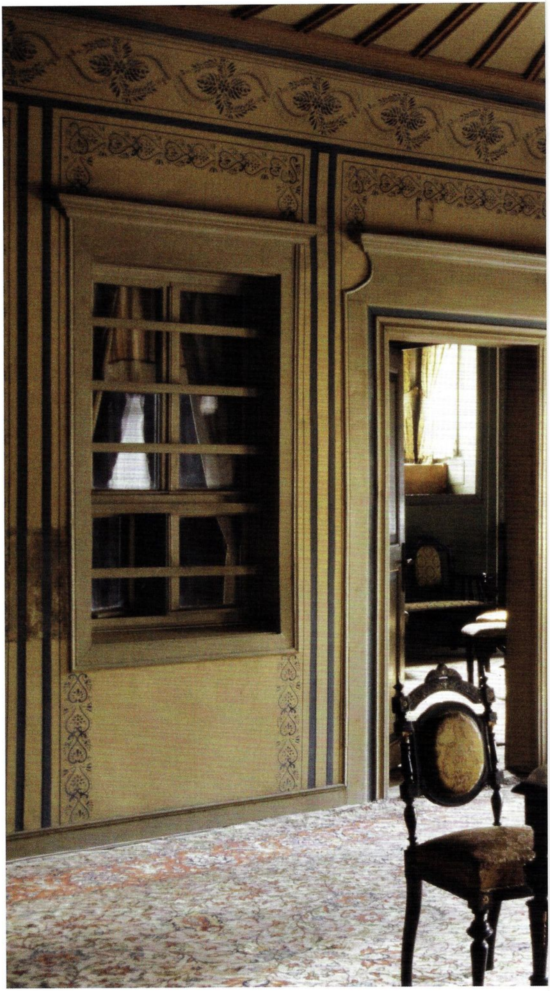
Evliya reported in 1652 that Filibe (modern Plovdiv, in Bulgaria) was one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in all of Rumelia, as the European part of Ottoman Turkey was known. "Every day thousands of loads are packed and unpacked," he wrote, describing the caravans that called at the city. He marvelled at the 14th-century clock tower on the top of Sahat Tepe (Clock Hill) – supposedly the first such Ottoman tower in Europe: "It chimes twice at noontime and is heard from afar." He wrote of the bridges, fountains, mosques, hamams, soup kitchens and caravanserais, and of the numerous splendid residences – 8,060, to be precise – covering the hills.

He enumerated the natural riches that created this radiant city: gold, silver and copper from the nearby Rhodope Mountains – mined by Alexander the Great's father, Philip of Macedon, who gave the city its earlier name, Philippopolis; fertile orchards and rice paddies along the River Maritza, which in Ottoman times, as now, was open to river traffic, and which becomes the Meriç as it flows into Turkey, past the minarets and domes of Edirne, to the Aegean; and, last but not least, the livestock of the lush Rhodopian pastures, where flocks of sheep were counted in their thousands – and where when I visited I found myself in a little restaurant beneath a crashing waterfall, eating the most delicious lamb in the world.

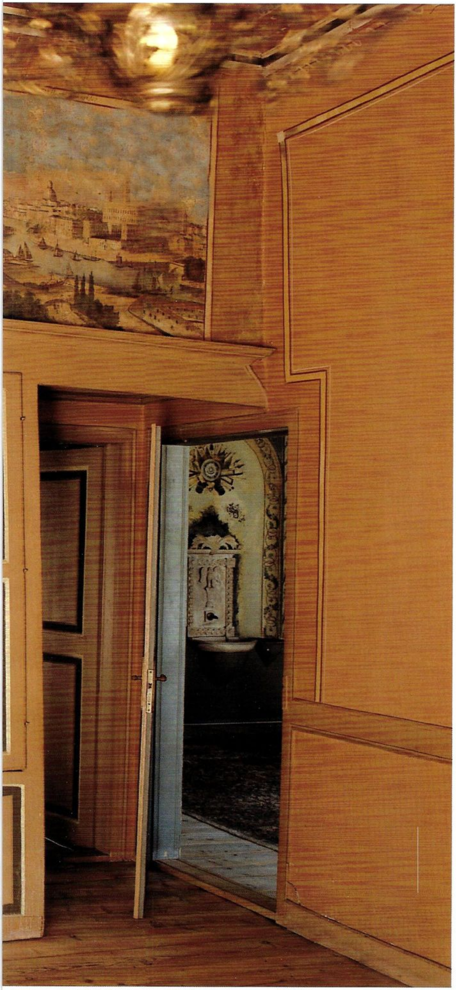
Ottoman Filibe flourished as a centre of manufacture and commerce into the 20th century, riding the political storms of the Eastern Question stirred up by the great powers. When Bulgaria gained autonomy in 1879 its princes remained vassals of the sultan, and the burghers of Filibe enjoyed liberal policies, commercial advantages, and a brand-new railway station. The Exposition Agricole et Industrielle Bulgare à Philippople of 1892 may not have been in the same league as the industrial fairs of Paris or London, but it would grow into an important showcase for Bulgarian produce. The number and grandeur of the houses, schools, mosques and churches still in use today testify to this boom. Political clouds might have been gathering, but life was as comfortable as ever, and Orthodox priests continued to wear the *tuğra*, the cipher of the Sultan, on their headdresses.

It was only in October 1908, when Sofia took advantage of the Young Turk Revolution in Istanbul, that Bulgaria declared itself independent and the prince no longer a vassal. Four years later the horrific Balkan Wars broke out. Together with the havoc of two world wars, they would create a legacy of hatred, chaos and poverty from which the Balkans are arguably yet to recover.

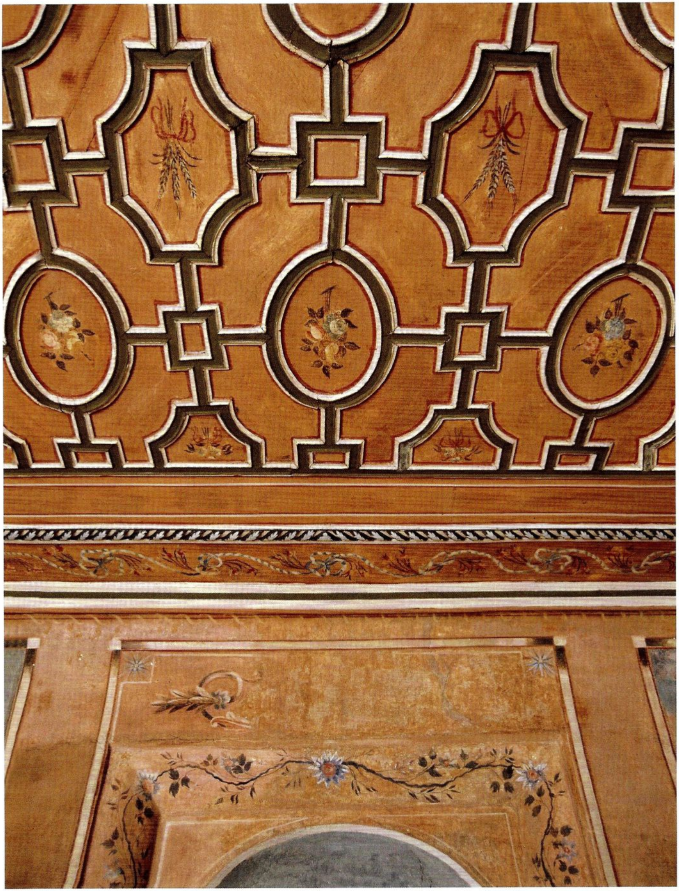
The beautifully restored mansions of historic Plovdiv that we see today date to the tail end of a happy epoch. Sizeable quarters on the south bank of the Maritza have been sensitively restored. They climb over three hills (the Roman Trimontium) that still bear Turkish names, unchanged since Evliya's day: Nebet Tepe (Watch Hill), Canbaz Tepe (Acrobat Hill, where funfairs were held) and Taksim Tepe (literally Dividing-Point Hill, where the water supply divides). While austere Soviet-style blocks mar the new town, the restoration of whole streets of houses, shops and churches in the old city has been remarkably careful, ▷*p39*

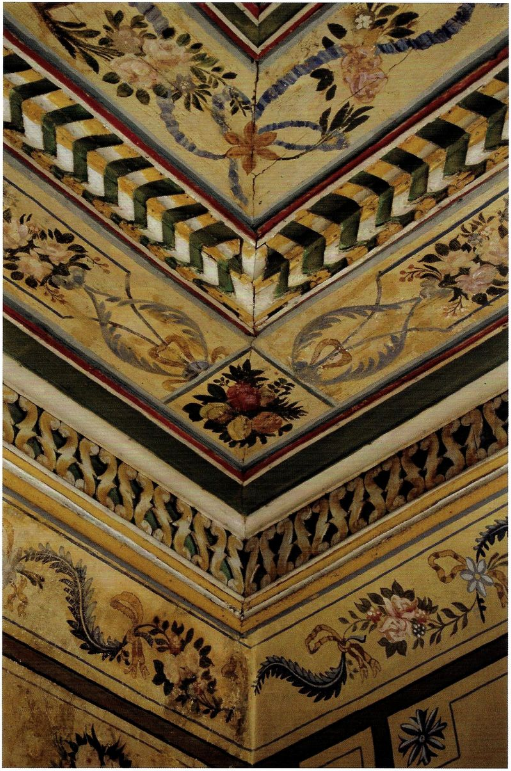


Still untouched in 2004, when this photograph was taken, the entrance hall on the ground floor serves as another 'sofa' to gather in, especially in winter. As on the floor above, four corner rooms lead off it – a symmetry that for 500 years remained the formula for all large houses across the Ottoman Empire, from the Adriatic to the Caucasus. The tent-like ceiling just visible here was in vogue on the Bosphorus in the 18th century and lived on in the Balkans into the 19th

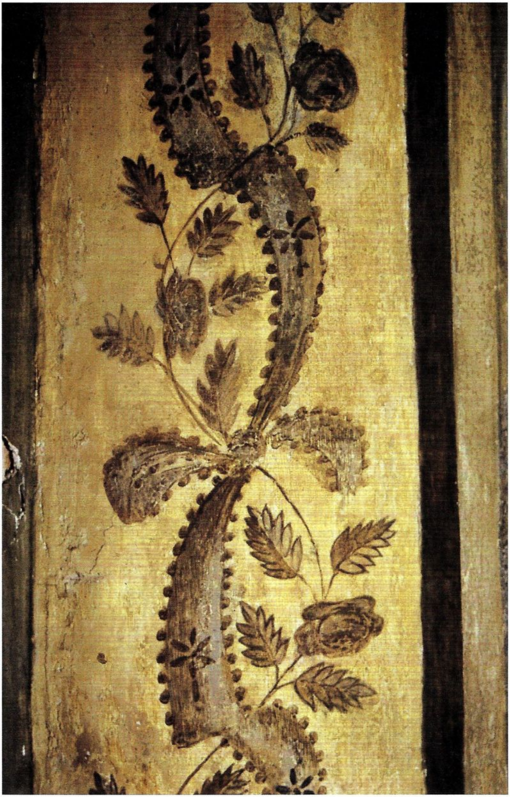


The rose bedroom on the first floor. Many of the views depicted are unidentified, but over the door is the Royal Palace in Stockholm, where the family had business ties. The cabinets would have been useful for bedding rolled up during the day: only later did free-standing furniture replace divans and cushions. Curved niches such as this, considered 'European' (hence the local name, 'alafranga'), occupied the position of traditional hooded fireplaces



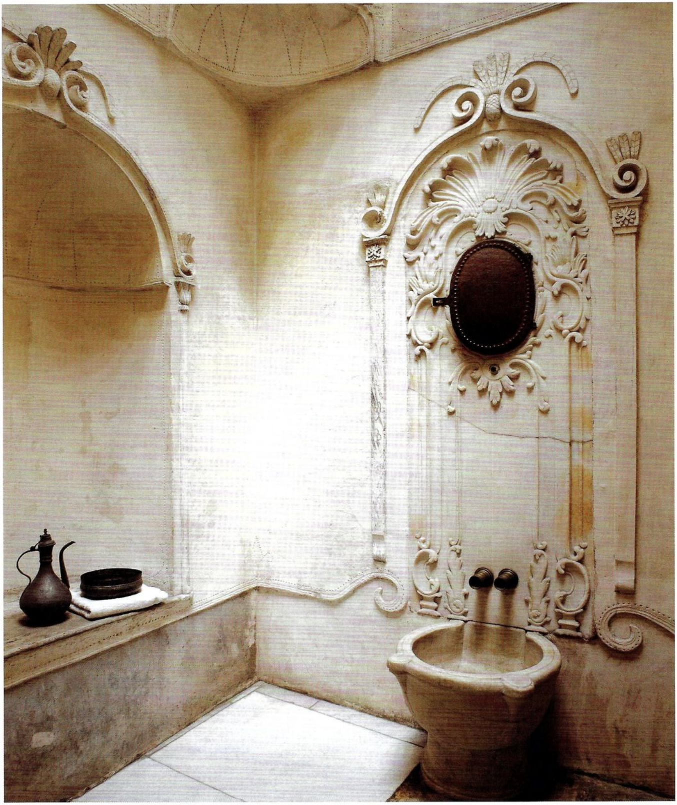


Opposite and above
The Hindliyan House is by no means the largest or showiest of the many merchants' mansions in Plovdiv, but it has the most elegant murals, with delicate ribbons, garlands and bouquets. Historical evidence is scant, but these murals are often attributed to two icon-painters, Moka and Mavroudy, from the nearby town of Chirpan, who are said to have worked for six months on the interior and exterior of the house



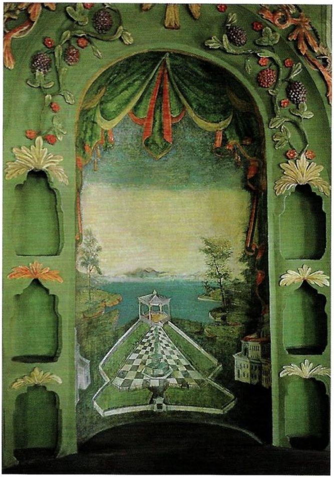
Above In the niche of the bedroom opposite, a scrolling ribbon intertwines with a climbing rose, a delicate detail inspired by 18th-century French design

Opposite Being on the ground floor, the bedroom has lower ceilings and smaller windows, so would be easier to heat in winter. Each room was like a self-contained apartment

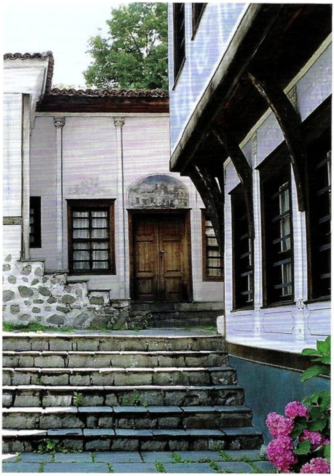


TIM BEDDOW

Above The house's hamam – a status symbol of wealthy Ottomans – is lit from above by elephant-eye windows in the dome. Bathers would have sat next to the marble basin ('kurna') on low wooden stools, ladling water over themselves with a silver or copper bowl ('hamam tasi'). Only the brass spigots of the hot and cold taps are missing here. The oval iron door above the basin could be opened to fill the room with steam. Terracotta pipes provided underfloor heating



BERRIN TOROLSAN



BERRIN TOROLSAN

ABOVE LEFT ANOTHER FRESCOED 'ALAFRANGA' NICHE – IN A BEDROOM ON THE GROUND FLOOR – RECALLS THE SULTAN'S GARDEN IN FENERBAHÇE, ON ISTANBUL'S ASIAN SHORE
ABOVE RIGHT STEPS LEAD UP TO THE SERVANTS' QUARTERS, HAMAM AND KITCHEN, ALL HOUSED IN THE COURTYARD, AWAY FROM THE MAIN HOUSE. OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE LIKED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HILLY TERRAIN

◁ *p29* giving an idea of the former glory of the vernacular architecture.

Hans Dernschwam, a Hungarian mining expert, wrote of trotting through Filibe on the afternoon of August 15, 1553, on his way to Constantinople. He did not much care for the houses, but acknowledged that the city was "paved".

Today, beautifully cobbled streets still meander up the hills, shaded by the overhanging upper floors of majestic houses built so close to each other that some are almost touching. Tall trees lean over gateways with their own elegantly curved roofs. Minuscule watchtowers (*köşk*, or kiosks) perch on garden walls.

Like all Ottoman cities, Filibe was highly cosmopolitan. Armenians, Greeks, Sephardic Jews, Bulgarians and Turks lived and traded happily together. They were often related, and families even had both Muslim and Christian branches – a fact apparently forgotten in recent Balkan history.

In this sociable society, houses were often connected by secret garden doors, which enabled the women of the household to slip next door to visit friends without being seen in public. This practical solution has to have been a female invention. I have seen the same garden doors in Prizren in Kosovo and in Bursa in Anatolia, where my grandparents lived. My grandmother said that one could get round an entire quarter without ever stepping into the street.

Strolling through Filibe, you sense that the city was not imposed on the landscape but grew out of it organically. The houses share a common poetry of form, but, charmingly, every one is built at a different angle, creating a web of structures dappled with light and shade. I rested at the top of a hill beside the house where the poet Lamartine stayed on his way back from Istanbul. There I reached up to a branch overhanging an old wall and quenched my thirst with a handful of juicy, gum-tingling black mulberries.

OLD PLOVDIV manages to avoid the deadening feel of a museum town, although many of its finest houses are open to the public. I wander into the courtyard of one of the oldest of these, built between 1834 and 1840 by a wealthy Armenian merchant, Stephan Hindliyan. There are pots of hydrangeas and flower beds of carnations, roses and wallflowers bordered with box hedges. On the right is the classically Ottoman house itself. On the opposite wall are the kitchen, larder, laundry and loo, all independent of the main house, as are the servants' rooms. Facing the house, on a raised terrace, a pergola crowned with vines creates a shady retreat. Next to it is the stone strongroom (*maaza*), which kept the family valuables safe from fire, a constant hazard.

Stephan Hindliyan's descendants believe the family originated in 17th-century Persia. They were Orthodox Christian merchants who had settled in Poland but were forced to flee by

Catholic persecution, taking refuge in Plovdiv in the early 18th century to enjoy the greater tolerance of the Ottoman Empire. A forebear with the original family name, Manuk, must have had close contacts with the Armenian merchant colonies in India, trading in spices and silk – hence the Turkish nickname "Hindli", "the Indian", which later became the family surname (the suffix "*yan*" means son).

The Hindliyan House has the classic features of what historians of Ottoman architecture call "a *hayat* house". *Hayat* literally means "life" – and this is indeed a house for living – but the word has come to refer to the spacious first-floor gallery overlooking a courtyard or walled garden, where people gathered, lived, worked and ate. Once open to the elements on one side, it later turned into a well-lit reception room.

As in all *hayat* houses, the façade is symmetrical, the plan rectangular. The entrance is flanked by overhanging loggias cantilevered on timber brackets. The frame is of timber: pine was sometimes used, but oak, chestnut or cedar was preferred. The stone foundations rise above ground level, compensating for the lie of the land and protecting the woodwork from damp – in many houses the ground floor is also of stone.

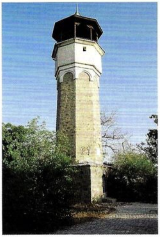
The façade is plastered and limewashed in lavender blue – in the old days the pigment would have been obtained from indigo. The main decorative elements are hand-painted white Neoclassical garlands and pilasters that complement the rectangular windows and straight lines of the structure. Perfect proportions, perfect symmetry.

The entrance hall also serves as a cool, shady reception room, or *sofa* (a word mysteriously introduced into English as a piece of furniture). Finely carved beading on the ceiling gives the illusion of a tent and may once have culminated in a central sunburst rosette (*nur-u Osmaniye*). Classic sunbursts are still carved locally, but this ceiling now sports a boldly modern rosette.

As tradition dictates, the hall opens into four corner rooms. A passage on the left leads to the private hamam, or Turkish bath – a luxury that would have been common to many houses in this part of town. A suite of three rooms, it consists of a small hall serving as a dressing or resting room, a tepidarium and a domed caldarium, or *halvet*, the warmest part of the bath, complete with a marble basin (*kurna*), in which water would be mixed to the desired temperature. Sitting on a low wooden stool, one poured water over oneself with a special copper or silver hamam bowl. Bathers were pampered by warm marble floors, heated from below by terracotta pipes that channelled hot air.

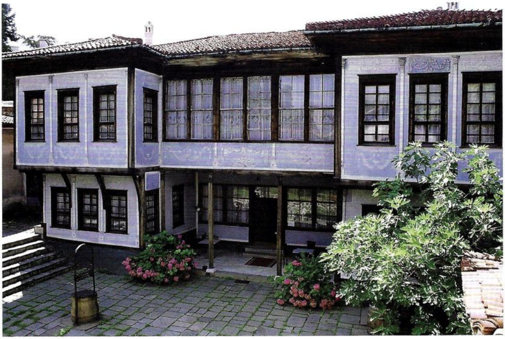
The mansion's principal room is the central hall or gallery upstairs, the old *hayat*, which is now a dining room. It opens into four corner rooms, mirroring the layout downstairs. The ceiling-height windows (seen in the façade's recessed central section below) still effectively let the outside in, especially in summer, when they are all flung open. Bringing in yet more light are paned interior windows shared by an adjoining corner room (the right-hand section, below).

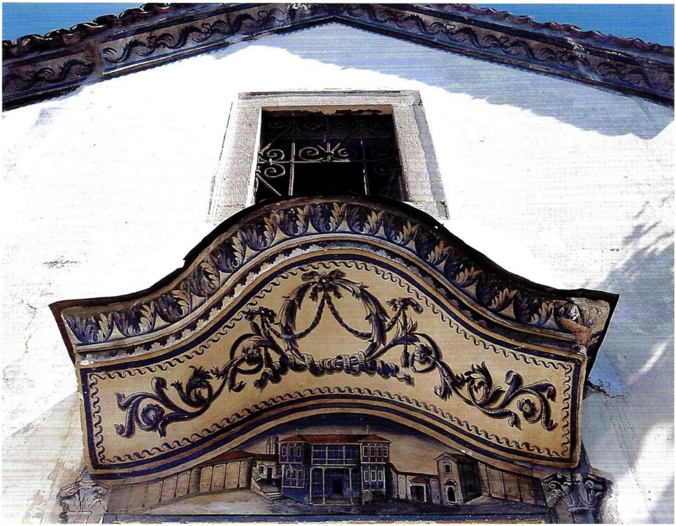
The fundamentals of traditional architecture are all there, but modifications have been made. Western customs were imported in the form of showy furniture – long dining tables, massive sideboards and big bedsteads, all requiring space. And the stiff collars and tight corsets of Western clothing made it essential, if one wished to sit elegantly, to exchange the original broad divans, or *sedirs*, which lined the walls under the windows, for more upright European chairs and settees. The delicate fountain at the end of the dining room is a reminder of the deeply rooted ritual of washing one's hands before and after meals. In this case the fountain circulated rosewater from


BERRİN TOROLSAN

Above Plovdiv's 14th-century Ottoman clock tower claims to be the oldest in Eastern Europe. It was restored by Mahmud II in 1809. During their conquest of the Balkans, the Ottomans made a point of building clock towers in newly captured cities

Right The house in 2004, when it was still pale lavender blue. It has since been repainted in stronger colours. Unusually for Plovdiv's 'National Revival' houses, as they are classified in Bulgaria, the central section of the house, the 'hayat', is recessed. Its simple, pure lines have much in common with classical 18th-century Bosphorus yalis


BERRİN TOROLSAN



TIM BEDDOW

a small tank hidden in the wall behind, filling the room with sound and a sweet scent.

Unique to the Hindliyan House is the painted armorial motif just above the rosewater fountain; one expects to see the Sultan's cipher, indicating the family's status in the Empire. If it was once there, it has long since vanished.

Daylight pours into the corner rooms on both floors. Each of these rooms would traditionally have served as a self-contained apartment for one branch of the family. Today they retain the built-in cabinets along one wall where bedrolls were once stowed away during the day. Portable braziers made the original hooded fireplaces superfluous, so they were transformed into elegant niches strangely described as *alafranga* (meaning "in the European manner").

Both internal and external walls are made of *bağdadî*, a form of lath and plaster: wooden trellises were nailed onto the supporting structure and covered with a plaster of lime, brick dust, egg white and filler, then finished to a satiny surface on which artisans exhibited their skills. Walls and ceilings are covered with a profusion of floral sprays, garlands, vignettes, bows, ribbons, baskets and cornucopias, Rococo and Baroque carvings, all elaborately painted and gilded.

Trompe-l'oeil drapes frame murals of Venice, Alexandria, Stockholm and Constantinople – ports reflecting far-flung business interests. An imposing Neoclassical building in one of the murals is said to be a fanciful depiction of Robert College, the famous American school on the Bosphorus – the Hindliyans sent generations of their sons to the best schools, whether in Germany, Switzerland, Vienna or Istanbul.

This building, a fine example of vernacular architecture, is just one of many Ottoman houses to have survived in Bulgaria, which has a remarkable record of restoring historic houses. It reflects an entire philosophy of living and prompts a reverie about the poetry of space, offering lasting inspiration to us all. ◆

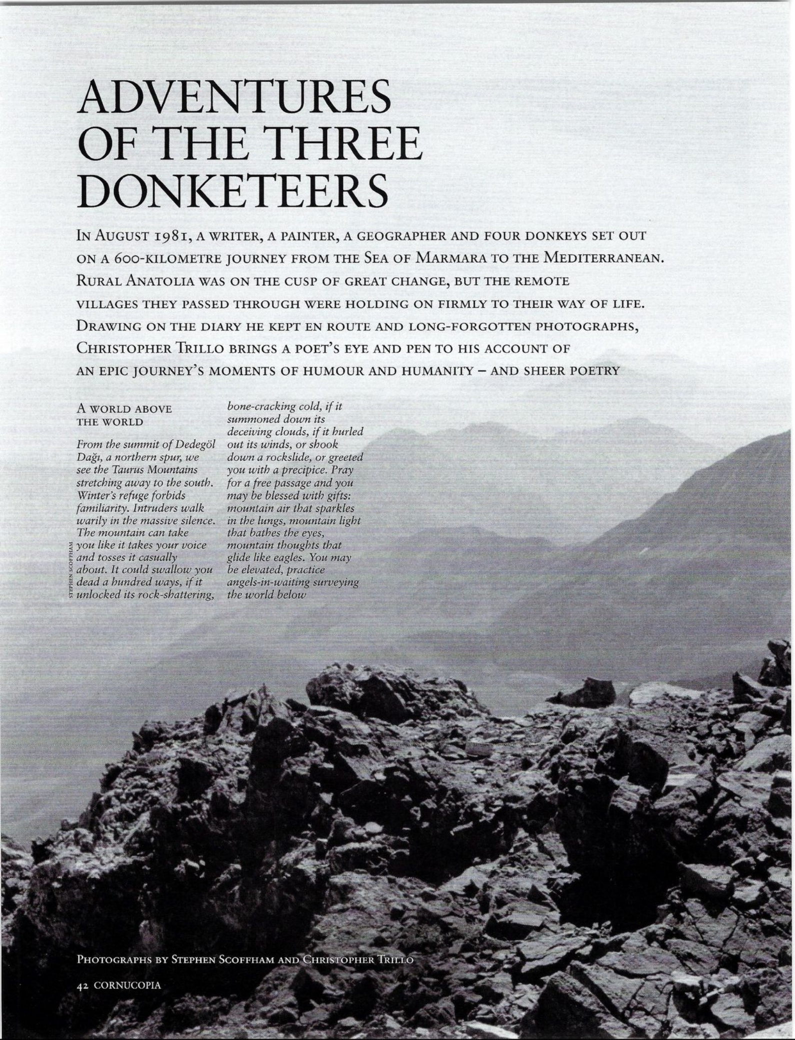
Hindliyan House Museum, ul Artin Gidikov 4, Plovdiv, Bulgaria. April–Oct 9–6; Nov–March 9–5.30; + 359 32 628 998; oldplovdiv.bg/en/sights/4. Also see wander-lush.org/tag/bulgaria for the house after recent conservation work, and cornucopia.net/plovdiv for further links

A shorter version of this article, 'The House that Hindliyan Built', appeared in 'The World of Interiors', February 2005

A MURAL ABOVE THE IRON DOOR OF THE STRONGROOM ('MAAZA') FAITHFULLY DEPICTS THE HINDLIYAN HOUSE AND ITS COURTYARD BUILDINGS. ON THE RIGHT OF THE MURAL IS THE STRONGROOM ITSELF, NEXT TO THE GATE INTO THE STREET

ADVENTURES OF THE THREE DONKETEERS

IN AUGUST 1981, A WRITER, A PAINTER, A GEOGRAPHER AND FOUR DONKEYS SET OUT ON A 600-KILOMETRE JOURNEY FROM THE SEA OF MARMARA TO THE MEDITERRANEAN. RURAL ANATOLIA WAS ON THE CUSP OF GREAT CHANGE, BUT THE REMOTE VILLAGES THEY PASSED THROUGH WERE HOLDING ON FIRMLY TO THEIR WAY OF LIFE. DRAWING ON THE DIARY HE KEPT EN ROUTE AND LONG-FORGOTTEN PHOTOGRAPHS, CHRISTOPHER TRILLO BRINGS A POET'S EYE AND PEN TO HIS ACCOUNT OF AN EPIC JOURNEY'S MOMENTS OF HUMOUR AND HUMANITY – AND SHEER POETRY



A WORLD ABOVE THE WORLD

From the summit of Dedegöl Dağı, a northern spur, we see the Taurus Mountains stretching away to the south. Winter's refuge forbids familiarity. Intruders walk warily in the massive silence. The mountain can take you like it takes your voice and tosses it casually about. It could swallow you dead a hundred ways, if it unlocked its rock-shattering, bone-cracking cold, if it summoned down its deceiving clouds, if it hurled out its winds, or shook down a rockslide, or greeted you with a precipice. Pray for a free passage and you may be blessed with gifts: mountain air that sparkles in the lungs, mountain light that bathes the eyes, mountain thoughts that glide like eagles. You may be elevated, practice angels-in-waiting surveying the world below

STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

PHOTOGRAPHS BY STEPHEN SCOFFHAM AND CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS: FIRST FIND YOUR DONKEYS

FROM THE AUTHOR'S DIARY: AUGUST 13, 1981

We arrive early on market day in the small town of Mustafakemalpaşa, near Bursa. It is a hubbub of concentrated rusticity. Just the place to find donkeys to carry an unfeasible number of bags of human and equine (or more correctly asinine) equipment. The town is a wall of noise, a mass of shifting colours, a festival of smells. Men and women from 40 villages are out to sell to each other from carts, lorries, baskets, sacks or spread cloths. We push past mountain ranges of aubergines, peppers, courgettes, peaches, plums…

Everywhere people are sitting, squatting, burrowing through, picking out, making offers, refusing offers, pouring vegetables into baskets, cloth bundles or panniers. There are donkeys everywhere, waiting patiently for their next indignity. Surely some must be ours.

Actually, not. The animal market has sheep, goats, cows, a few horses – but no donkeys. They are still needed in the fields, it seems. If we come back in a month, we can have our pick for free. No one wants to feed them through the winter. People listen politely, but no one really believes our plan. We try to prove our credentials, at least to ourselves, by buying ropes, nosebags, more saddlebags. Now the only thing missing for our donkey trek is… donkeys.

Plan B is to go to a village. Back at our fifth-class hotel, the men drinking tea and smoking in the lobby consult. A consensus emerges: Çaltılıbük, upriver, is the place to go. For our advisers it is a byword for an abundance of donkeys. Somebody's uncle once bought one there. A small boy is sent to secure us places on the minibus. I worry that we will need the whole bus for our luggage, but we have quite a modest load compared with our fellow travellers, returning from market with more than they brought.

And so, jammed into position, we roar off in clouds of dust into the dusk, shaken in our metal casing through idyllic countryside. It is the early-evening animal rush hour. Our minibus charges, brakes, swerves and hoots its way through shambling processions of beasts and wobbling, rattling, laden carts. Animal bells and cries, human voices lap around us. Meanwhile, the symposium that is a Turkish minibus ride takes up the issue of us, raising questions that will soon be very familiar. Are we on a survey? Working for the borax company? No, we're English tourists seeking to buy donkeys for a journey. Although this is patently untrue, they humour us by expressing absolute certainty about the ready availability of donkeys in Çaltılıbük. They are less clear about specifics such as price.

An hour later, we leave our baggage under a plane tree in the centre of the village, choose the

IT WAS AUGUST 1981 – not the most auspicious time for three Englishmen to embark upon a trek across Anatolia, from north to south, from Mustafakemelpaşa and the Sea of Marmara, to Serik and the Mediterranean.

Eleven months after the September coup, Turkey was still under military rule. The anarchy and violence were over, but, although 650,000 people had been arrested, suspects were still believed to be in hiding. It is really surprising, therefore, how little suspicion we encountered or how little the recent political traumas affected our reception. There was ample evidence of strong political affiliation among many of the people we met but we did not see signs of the intensity of violence, chaos and anger we had witnessed in Istanbul and the national media.

Our party numbered seven. The human contingent consisted of Simon, an artist; Stephen, geographer and photographer; and Christopher, writer, linguist and photographer. Along with us came four donkeys: Professor Plodder (stoical, obtuse, submissive), Dylan (wistful, poetic, a dreamer, rucksacks on his back); Mr (or Dr) Dobbs (cunning and vengeful), and King Trevor (megalomaniac leader among ass-kind).

For part of the way we would be joined by Roger Crowley, a future historian, and his wife Jan, the ceramicist Janie Conway, Alice Dugdale, a budding art historian, and John Scott, future editor of this august publication.

CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

Why did we do it? For an adventure. Because it was there. Because we could. Out of love for Turkey: to see the "real" Turkey, the true heart of the country, the home of traditional values. To experience the life aligned to nature. To broaden our knowledge while documenting the region's rich and varied culture at a time of seismic change.

The idea of *memleket* (something like homeland) was still alive and potent in the identity and affections of many of our Turkish friends and emptier of two teashops, and, over the first round of teas, unveil our proposition, then sit back as all possible options, and more, are debated. Men drift over from the other teashop, their houses or fields, to hear our story and to express disbelief, amusement, advice.

Some are sure we can find donkeys here; others favour the next village. But one thing is agreed: we need food and rest. Tomorrow everything will be clear. Ahmet, who has adopted us, leads us away, having organised a party to deliver our luggage. We have been kidnapped by kindness.

AUGUST 14 Overnight, word has continued to spread. Even before we have dressed, we hear from a donkey outside, awaiting inspection. Depressed, elderly and undernourished, it doesn't inspire confidence. The surly owner insists on TL15,000 (about £25). We offer 9,000. He is insulted. Twelve is the lowest he can go. We walk away; he lets us. This is obviously a tea situation, and the whole village gathers, women and children on the fringes, men and donkeys at the centre. Ahmet, our host, melts away and a hadji takes on the role of negotiator/mediator as a succession of frail or overpriced candidates are led past.

Our hadji grabs my hand and the hand of a seller and tries to pull them together, to seal a deal. Disappointment increases with each no-sale. We must prove we are serious. We up our offer for the first donkey to TL10,000, and the triumphal hadji-assisted handshake and the sight of our money triggers renewed enthusiasm.

A positive parade begins, as donkeys of every size, colour, age and disposition are driven, ridden and cajoled past us. We entertain the audience with our test rides and displays of incompetence. We make two more purchases, the last a victory of popular pressure over owner reluctance. He wanted 15,000 for his magnificent beast. We have offered 13,500. The crowd push him towards us. His hand is grabbed and shaken. Everyone is delighted, except the seller, who leaves. We are immediately offered 15,000, an instant profit, by a man who had initially misunderstood our requirements and tried to sell us his giant rabbit.

The next act in the Donkey Tourist Show is the attempt to load our extensive luggage. While we are busy watching demonstrations amidst a tumult of advice, a woman appears, her eyes fixed in a look of steady, controlled anger, walks straight to our prize donkey and leads him quickly away. She stops to give the hadji 13,000. No one speaks. No one intervenes. When I protest that we had an agreement, there is an embarrassed silence. "We'll find you another one just as good," says the hadji sheepishly. Obviously, the woman holds the reins, literally, at least in that household. ◆

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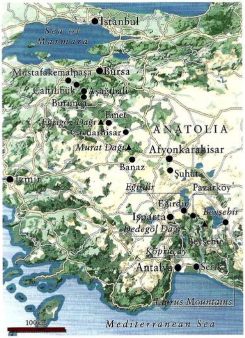
associates. A lot of people remain fiercely proud of their family's village or region of origin, even at one or more generations and long geographical remove. We were curious to find out more about the connections between town and country and the rural roots that continue, across the distance of time and space, to nurture such a sense of belonging.

Our choice of donkeys as companions and porters was inspired by reading too many of the great adventurers of the past, such as Robert Louis Stevenson and George Borrow, with all their romantic associations. We also had the vague idea that it would slip us into the pace and lifestyle of village Anatolia, and so it was to prove.

Donkeys were the key to our engagement with the land and the people. They allowed us to fit into the rhythms of village life, affording us the status of *yolcu* (traveller), with the customary rights to hospitality. And they enabled us to travel on tracks across landscapes that we could not have negotiated except on foot, to reach villages inaccessible to all but the hardiest vehicles.

The donkeys themselves (not to mention the humans) were by turn sulky, playful, exuberant, aggressive, lazy, hungry, lustful, wilful and patient. They effected an immediate introduction for us to the people we met. Our management of them, or failure to manage, provoked much comment. The only times the animals were roused beyond a reluctant plod were either when they were taken in hand by a fellow traveller, or when sexually aroused by the sight or scent of another, particularly desirable donkey. Then they would career off, spilling bags and sacks, braying, heads back, lips frothing in passion. This farcical and embarrassing performance heralded our arrival at a number of villages. But the animals also carried our baggage for eight-and-a-half weeks, and for some 370 miles, finding footholds up improbably steep screes, along impossibly narrow ledges, distracted only by the occasional wayside thistle.



SUSANNA HICKLING

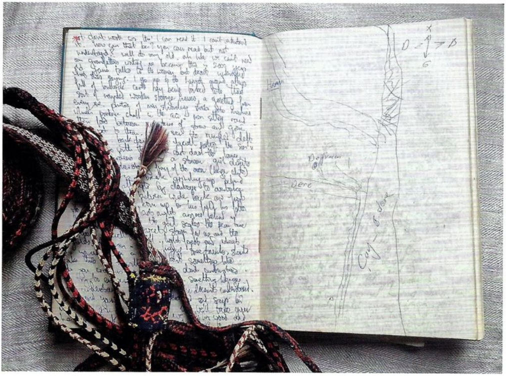
We crossed a hugely diverse landscape of great beauty. Marshy pastures, wooded mountain slopes and valleys beneath stark, craggy heights; lush river valleys spilling over with verdant *bostans* (kitchen gardens) and orchards; alpine meadows; plains barren and rocky or fertile and arable. We slept out under stars (or clouds) on

THE ROUTE

After buying the donkeys in Çaltılıbük in the hills near the Sea of Marmara, we crossed the broken terrain at the western edge of the great Turkish plateau, passing through Emet and Çavdarhisar. We climbed Murat Dağı (c2,000 metres), dropped into the dry, dusty landscape between Banaz and Şuhut, and headed down to Lake Eğirdir.

Turning eastwards, we crossed a northern spur of the Taurus, climbing Dedegöl Dağı (c3,000 metres) and descending again to Lake Beyşehir. Then for two days we traversed the rocky desolation of the main Taurus.

Finally, with the Mediterranean shining ahead of us, we dropped almost vertically into the canyon of the Köprüçay. Exhausted, we stopped and sold the donkeys in the first village we came to, at the edge of the fertile, humid coastal plain



DIARY OF A JOURNEY

The diary was scrawled when opportunity allowed, often in the dark in a sleeping bag, when the day was still vivid in my mind. The book was subsequently dipped in some oily substance, which I have nicknamed Donkeylene. It gave the pages a mysterious sheen and dissolved some of the words, together with the memories they conveyed

A helpful villager drew this map. It shows the route to the hot-spring baths, dug into the gravel of a dry riverbed for the health and delectation of local people during the summer. It doesn't have a scale, or indeed much detail. Surprisingly, however, and entirely uselessly, it shows the points of the compass. It also shows the river (partly crossed out and redirected), a mill and the hamam itself. We were confidently told that it was a three-hour walk. We finally arrived sometime the next evening

mountainsides, by lakesides, in meadows. We slept in log cabins in *yaylas*, in guest rooms, in *selamlıks*. We used the American Air Force map, showing major landmarks visible from 30,000 feet, and the touristic map of Turkey, but for local detail we were absolutely dependent upon villagers.

They liked to direct us along main roads, the modern choice for speed, ease and efficiency. We learnt to ask them, instead, for the *patika yol* to the next village. These are the old rough tracks that often only the older inhabitants would be able to help us to find. They gave us, orally, what were in effect our detailed local maps, naming key landmarks: the mill, the isolated building, the old fountain. At other times they wrote down the names of the people whose house we would be passing, even penning a note of introduction. Or they drew a simple plan on paper or used a stick in the dirt to show forks and turnings.

On a high plateau, smooth and green as a thousand sheep-tended cricket pitches, broken by marsh, an old man and a girl sat cross-legged, remarking our approach, unsurprised. His job was to sit here and watch – the cows, the horses, the passing clouds, the procession of days and nights. And today his granddaughter was here to help him. He gave us apples from his basket and traced out the route to the next village on the palm of his weathered hand, his finger following the cracks and furrows.

Atop a rocky shoulder, under a murderous sun, our path was suddenly blocked by dogs, appearing loudly out of nowhere. An old man materialised, scattering turkeys and hens, and, at his command, the dogs slouched back. "We'll drink tea before you pass," he called to us. "No one passes without drinking tea, not even my worst enemy. When he leaves, he is my enemy again."

In the deep shade of his shack, where chickens hopped among sacks, or fled in panic and returned clucking soothingly, he brewed thyme tea, aromatic mountain breeze in a glass. We should come here in the fourth month, he said with a mixture of weariness and childlike enthusiasm, his face, like his clothes and his home, proud in ruins. We should come for the first honey, and the intoxicating scent of the crocuses – then we would never leave.

Yet his four sons had left – sold the sheep and deserted him. He was alone now, with his bees and dogs and poultry, offering tea and conversation to strangers, a brief flowering of generosity, a sharing of wisdom and grief and love, born of struggle, remembered for ever.

Everywhere, Turkish rural customs of hospitality prevailed. We were seldom able to pass a field or house without an invitation to tea, a meal, a bed for the night, or at the very least an apronful of fruit or a melon.

"Look," we would say, pointing at our bulging saddlebags, "we have five already."

Shrug. "Well then, you must take ours as well."

So often the old rituals were observed: a junior member of the family would pour water from a jug over a basin for us to wash our feet, wash our hands; they would squirt cologne into our hands to pat into face and neck, before bringing a tray of Turkish coffee, or perhaps glasses of tea, with sweets or fruit or nuts.

All of these observances, and the accompanying conversation, are merely holding procedures while a meal is prepared somewhere, so that when it arrives it would be rude to refuse, and then it is too late to move on, and in any case the road is treacherous. "You must stay. We have killed a young goat for you. The people of the next village are not honest. Our village has the best people with the cleanest hearts. We have the sweetest, coldest water, the tastiest sheep, fattened on mountain flowers. Fate has

Some of the areas we passed through had not changed over hundreds of years, and we were aware that we were travelling on the crest of a huge social, political, economic upheaval

sent you to us. Once in a thousand years such things happen. You must stay with us."

Hospitality is literally built into the structure of the villages. Each has a guest room, such as one to which we were shown, where waves of weary kilims lapped against bumpy whitewashed walls, and where 20 lumpy mattresses waited in line, veterans of smoke-filled, sock-smelly nights. There was a stove at the centre, target for cigarettes smoked till they singed the moustache. Here we received a rising, ebbing tide of village men, and accepted gifts of tea and food handed around on huge trays by whispering women. In niches, ready for action, stood a stocky teapot, slender tulip-shaped glasses, wide-hipped water pots and flickering lamps.

But usually a family would insist on our staying in their home, and sometimes we had two competing invitations. We would be treated to a profusion of simple, delicious dishes. We ate with the family from shared bowls, sitting cross-legged in a circle around the *sofra* (dining cloth). The evenings then often continued with visits from neighbours, seated according to status, with the *hoca* (cleric), the *muhtar* (headman), the teacher, the returning guest worker in pride of place, and with other interested folk farther from the guests of honour.

In some villages, the imperative to talk developed into lengthy question-and-answer sessions about the exact nature of our own villages, their produce and social arrangements, religious and political attitudes. I was often addressed as *hocam* (sir, or "my teacher"), because of my beard or my profession, and we were commonly shown quite undeserved deference as experts on the many mysterious aspects of Frangistan (Western Europe, the land of the Franks).

Some of the areas we passed through had not changed over hundreds of years, and we were aware that we were travelling on the crest of a huge social, political, economic upheaval. One visible issue was rural depopulation. Periodically we were asked: "Why don't you stop here and take that house and fields for yourselves?" Many of the remoter villagers were still pre-electric, though some had their light fittings and even light bulbs in place.

We stayed in villages where people gathered in the teashop or a garden to watch *Dallas* on a television powered by a car battery. We saw probably the last of the subsistence economy, the rose-oil still, the opium-oil press, the adobe brick moulds, the watermill, the handloom, the wheelwright, the saddle-maker, the hand-spinning and dyeing, the children standing on the threshing board, pulled round and round by oxen over the wheat stalks.

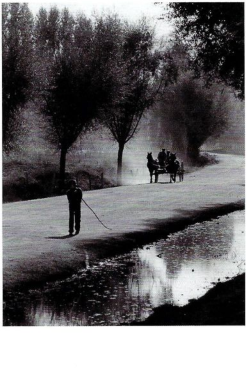
We were proudly conducted to innumerable ancient sites. We were shown and sometimes offered countless carvings and inscriptions and coins and rings, enough to create our own museum. We were asked to share the maps we surely must have, revealing the whereabouts of buried treasure or precious mineral deposits, or, failing that, to send metal detectors from England.

For all three of us, this trek was one of the most powerful experiences of our lives: affirming, revelatory, life-altering. I think that it was my inoculation against "affluenza", a life-threatening and widespread condition which was at that time yet to be identified. We might be accused – or accuse ourselves – of engaging in poverty tourism, romanticising harsh and deprived conditions, and it is difficult to defend ourselves against the charge, except perhaps to say that the lives we encountered had – and continue to have – so much to teach us and our own fragmented, materialistic, alienated world.

Many of the villagers were poor, objectively. Their lives were hard, exposed to danger, disease and scarcity. But one of the many sayings we heard repeatedly expressed a truth that I have kept with me ever since: "Not rich in pocket but rich in heart".

We felt humbled by so much unforced generosity, by the openness to us, by the discovery of a shared humanity deeper than our many apparent differences. "*Hepimiz insan*," as we were repeatedly told ("We are all human").

The most poignant expression of the contrast between our lives and theirs was their oft-repeated faith that "if we came to your village we would receive the same welcome". And I would visualise with secret shame the reception that would greet a dishevelled band of Turkish travellers entering Little Wittering at twilight. ◆



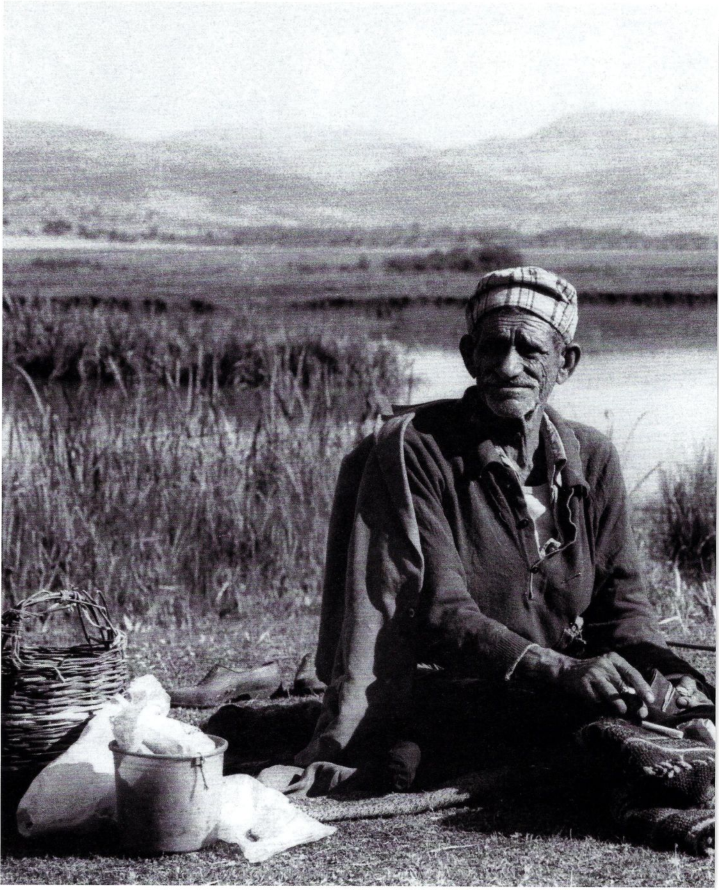
STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

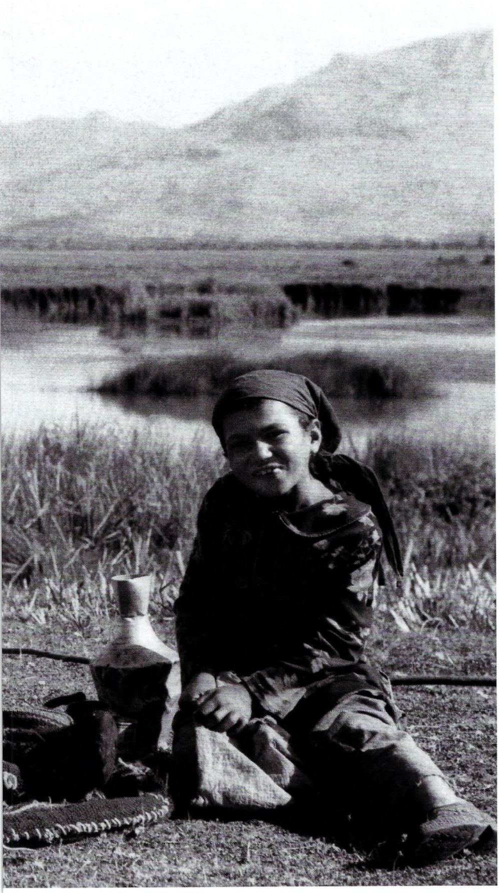
ON THE ROAD
In the cool hours of dawn and dusk, two tides of movement disturb the fine dust of the road as it ambles out of the village and back again, past scattered fields to distant pastures, woods and valleys. Resting in the shade of a wild pear, you meet everyone: pedlars, their carts strung with plastic buckets, pans and cloth; herdsmen haloed in the dust of their shuffling beasts; villagers with mules camouflaged under tomatoes or firewood, mounted or on foot, alone and in groups, returning and leaving. None pass without the greeting 'Selamün aleyküm' and its response 'Aleykum selam'

CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

DESCENT FROM MURAT DAĞI

As we sweep down into the world of men, the air grows denser and hotter with every step. We are walking into a life-size map of our next few days, a great patchwork of browns: strips of fallow, stubble or ploughed ground



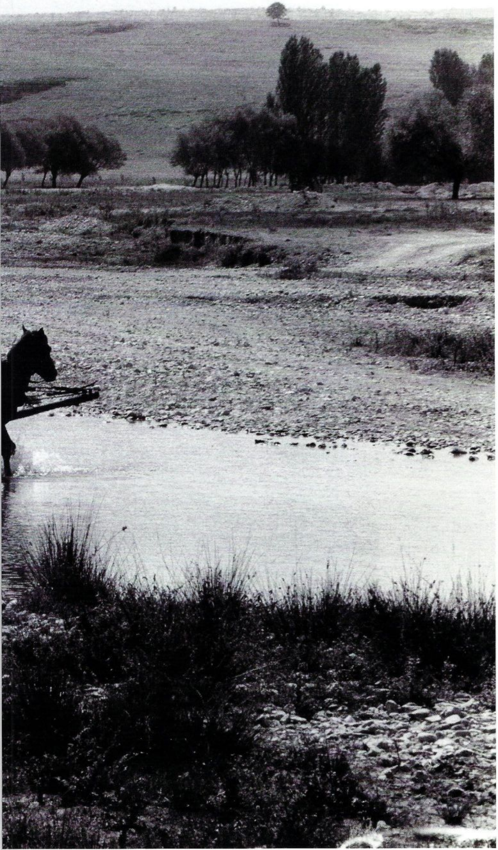


CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

THE SOUL OF PATIENCE

Pazarköy, Eğirdir Marshland divides the high plateau between Eğirdir and Beyşehir. Ragged beds of reed and iris, tea-dark water infused with sky and lily pad. Every step unleashes a frog in a low green arc, from the grass to the plop and croak and long, lazy bubble of water.

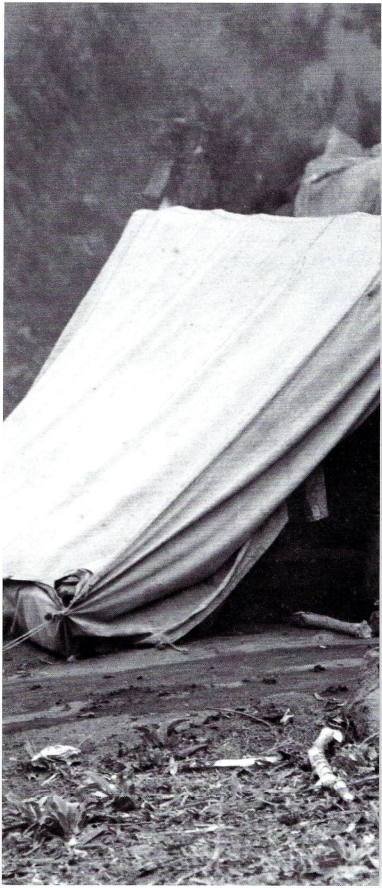
We come upon this old man sitting cross-legged, a young girl at his side. Steadily he watches our approach. His job is to sit here and watch: the cows, the horses, the passing clouds, the procession of days and nights. And today his granddaughter is here to help him. He gives us apples from his fraying old basket, offers cigarettes and conversation, and traces out for us the route to the next village with his finger on the palm of his hand



STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

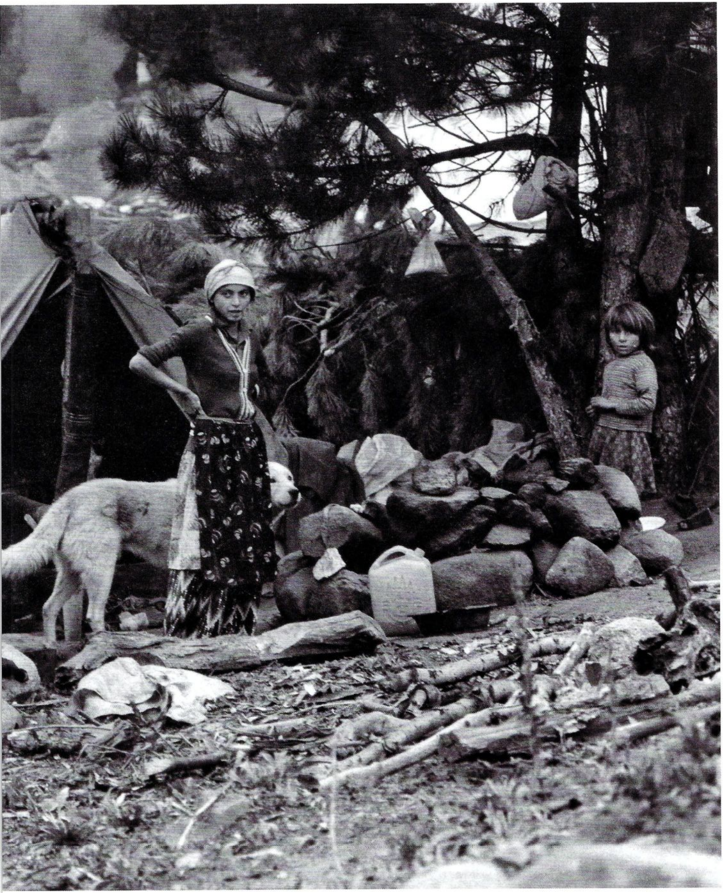
River of life

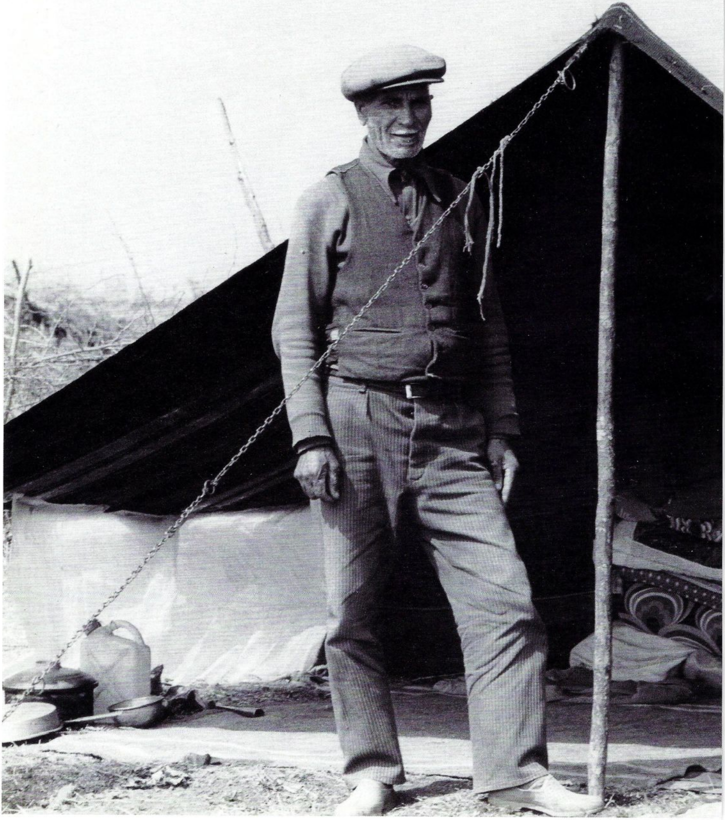
Çavdarhisar The river is the kitchen, the bathroom, the laundry, the playroom, the fish shop, the cart-wash. A man drives his cart in and jumps down. He washes the work from his face and hands, then drinks a draught. Women wash their wheat over special beds of rock midstream. Loose grains tumble downriver and rival gangs of geese jostle for the pickings, honking in triumph or indignation. Children splash while mothers batter their bedlinen on ancient tombstones along the bank. Huge cauldrons of clothes steam beside them. Two cows amble past to drink and add to the flow. A sluggish stream straggles out of the village and stains the river briefly brown. The river is the sewer, the goose farm, the power of the mill, the vigour of the crops. It is the memory of rain, the licence to live. May Allah bless the river that blesses us

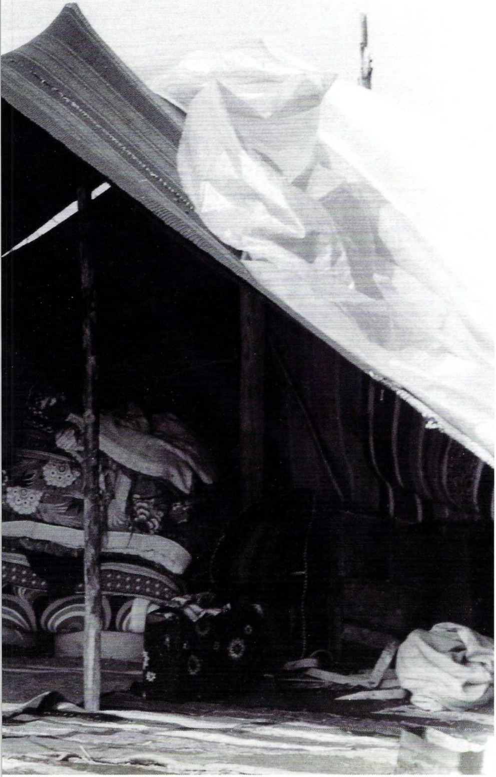


STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

THE YÖRÜK CAMP
Murat Dağı The clouds are down on Mount Murat. The dog growls. The daughter breaks the rhythm of her kneading to watch us. The mother calls out: 'You aren't passing without drinking ayran!' Cheese bags drip from the pine trees. We sit in a circle on the track and the tiniest daughter passes round the wooden bowl of buttermilk







STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

WANDERING SPIRITS

Above Eğirdir

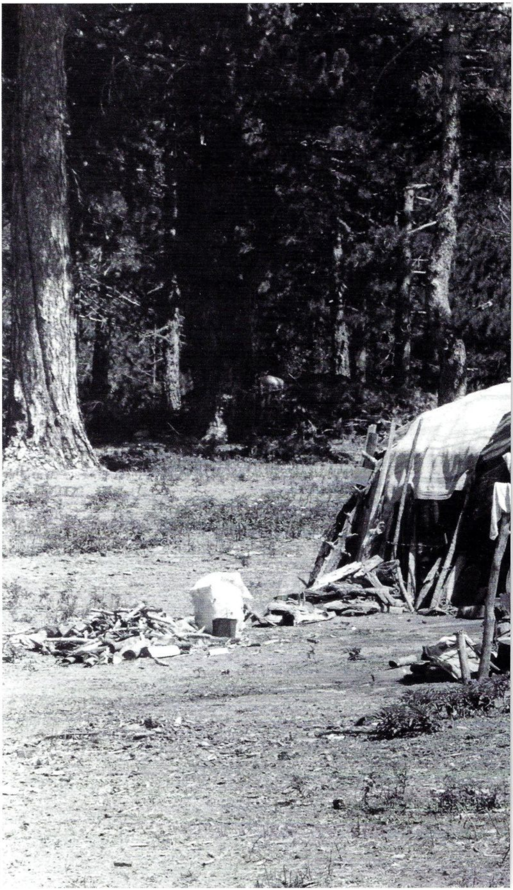
The town's children have a game. One plays a gypsy, puts on an ogre's face and comes after the others. 'Aaagh, the gypsy, the monster, the thief is coming.'

The real gypsies are camped on a bare hillside above the market ground. Ahead of us, a one-legged youth is riding a stallion. Suddenly, swifter than seeing, he is up on its back, waving his crutch in the air. He wheels the horse off the track to the camp: dust, chickens, a smouldering fire and a few tents hung with tattered sacks and plastic sheeting.

Two men sit amid the debris of their basketwork. They beckon us over. 'Drink tea. Drink tea.' A kettle on the wood fire and a rug spread in the dust for the guests. Apples and tea and talk. They tell of their travels up from the coast in the spring. Chickens tiptoe into tents and flutter out.

The one-legged boy takes up his saz, a fiddle appears and a drum. Rusty dance music spills heavily into the air. Ragged boys and girls leap from nowhere to dance – jumping, whirling, shuffling, hip-tossing, finger-snapping, belly-shaking dancing.

'This is the people we are,' says the old man standing in front of us, enfolding in his generous sweep the dancing, the stories, the tents, the animals, the tea, the mountains, the sky and the winding track. 'This is how we live.'



STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

SUMMER VISITORS
Eğrigöz Dağı, near Emet Sunlit summer pasture, the colour of heaven. Nomads and villagers in tents and shacks farm the mountainous frontier of the world, ready to run when winter stirs

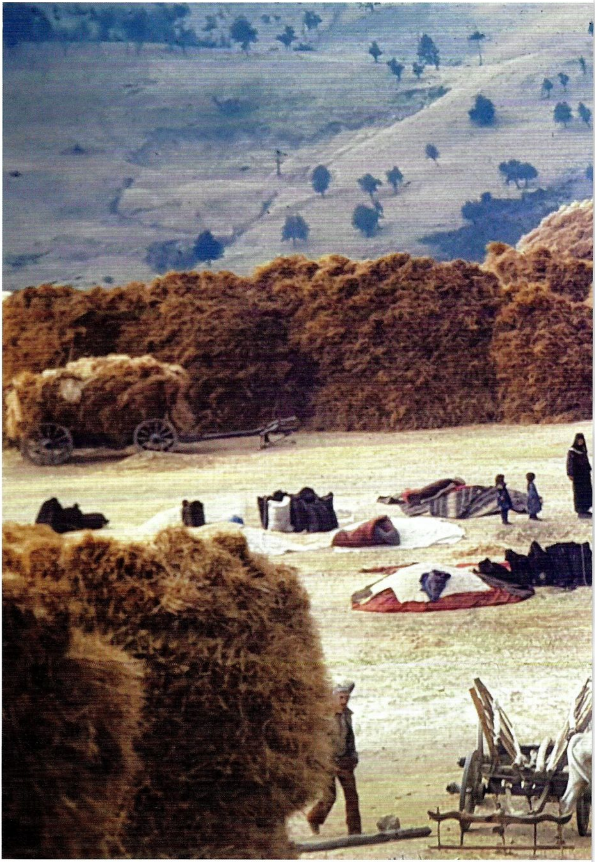
A BUMPER HARVEST

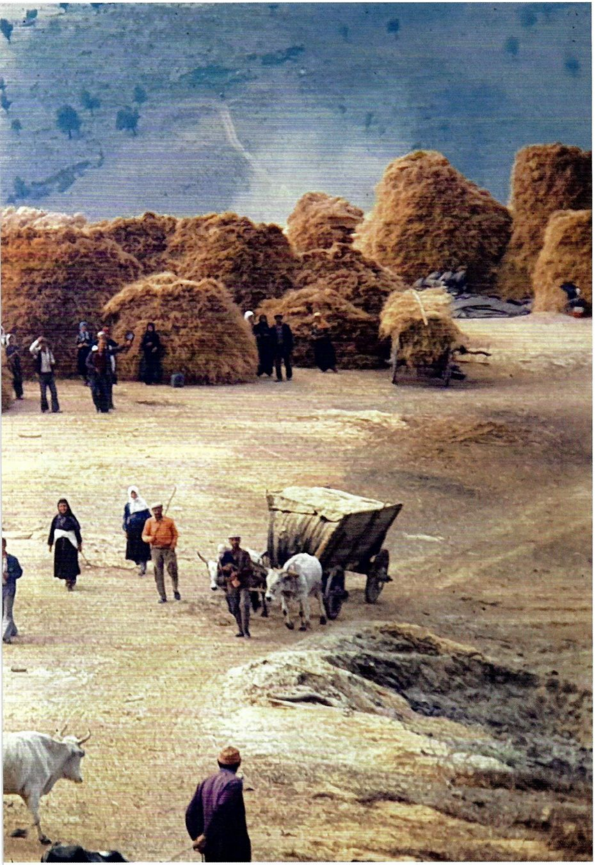
Aşağıbali On the open ground above the village, a day's walk from Çaltılıbük, where the journey began, the grain is all laid out, in heaps, in stooks and groaning carts.

The harvest is coming home. It's solar payday. Hard-earned blessings pouring down the chain of creation, from sun to earth, to men and women, to beasts. And the surplus is drained off in exhausted, elated smiles. This winter, at least, the village is provided for.

Men are loading the carts, women threshing, children directing chickens, and old folk at tug of war with calves. Out of sight, the village below is jostling: animals researching among the dung, dust, grain and feathers.

Some of the villages we visited were inaccessible to all but the hardiest vehicles and ran on an animal economy: oxen for pulling the screeching solid-axle carts, for ploughing and threshing; horses for speed; big, strong pack mules for heavy goods; and, of course, donkeys – for most villagers the normal way to travel, if not for tourists





CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

Following pages

GIRL IN AN OX CART

Top left *A father and daughter set off to the forest, the tiny girl driving the oxen, in control of their immense, slow power. They must haul a winter's worth of wood back home*

THE WELCOMING COMMITTEE

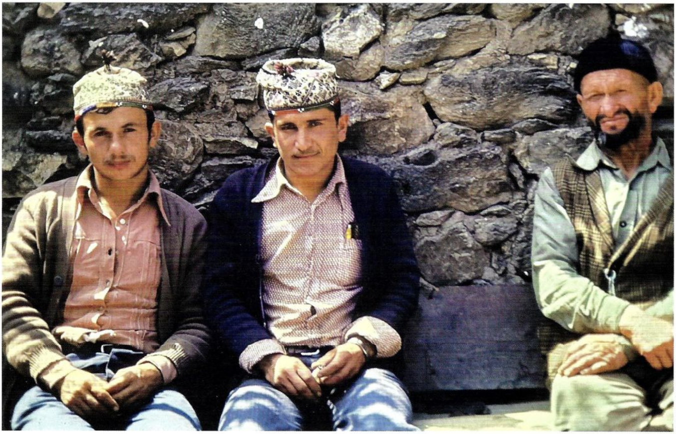
Bottom left
Two young men of Burunca, flowers tucked into their embroidered caps, greeted us as we entered their village. They lead us into the vine-dappled shade of the mosque courtyard where the older men sit, waiting for something. Today it is us. We are each awarded a branch of plums, dripping wet from the fountain, a pale blush on their dream-dark skins. Inside the mosque a man puffs over a stove. Tea is coming

BRINGING HOME THE HARVEST

Top right *Huge white oxen stare blankly, chewing on some distant memory of hay, as men in Aşağıbali shovel grain off the cart and into the storage huts*

DUST BATH

Bottom right
Bliss is a dust bath, sweet relief from heat, baggage and horseflies. Released from duty, saddles removed, it's donkey playtime – a moment to take the weight off their feet, have a good scratch and rub dust into their tired, sweaty backs



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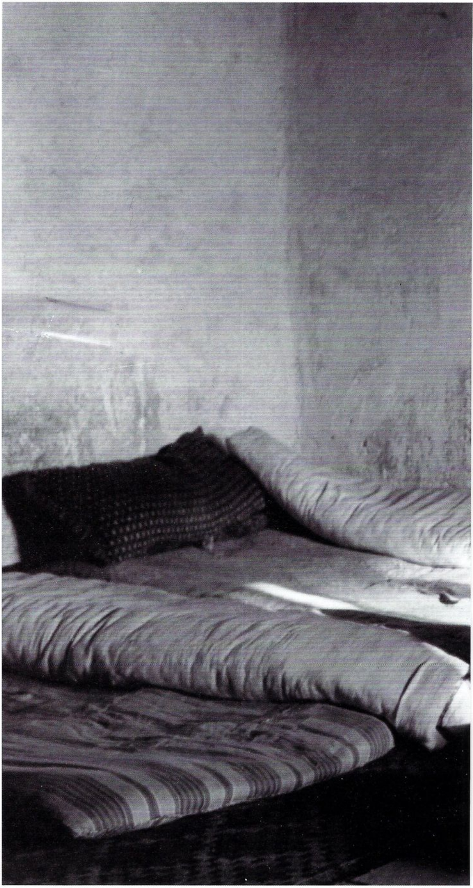
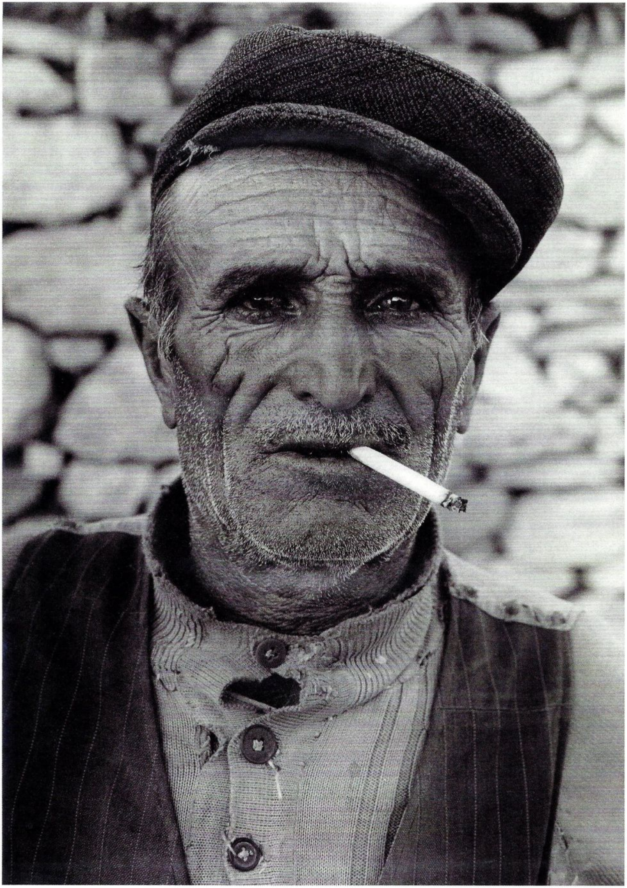


STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

AND SO TO BED

The dream-stocked twilight of a village guest room, with its rough whitewashed walls, where weary travellers are invited to stay a night, to sleep on one of many lumpy mattresses.

A teapot and glasses are brought out from the niche. In cold weather the antiquated stove is lit. On this summer night we lie and listen to crickets sawing chunks out of the silence



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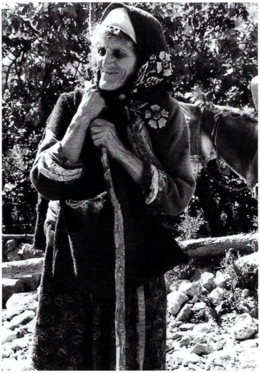
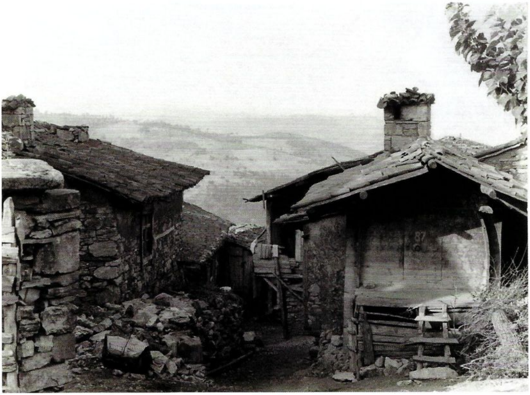


CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

This page, far left
BEAUTY IN UTILITY
Near Çavdarhisar
The ancient bucket came up from the well, cascading water from its joins and water-polished knotholes as it jerked towards us. But it still arrived with plenty

Left
LADY BOUNTIFUL
'Nereye böyle?' ('Where are you off to like that?') Checking us out and checking we had enough watermelons. (We hadn't: we only had one each)



STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

Left
VILLAGE HOUSES
Erikli Look at these houses closely. They are labours of family love. Building stones borrowed from the mountains; beams and planks dragged from the forest; tiles and bricks sun-baked in wooden moulds. All cut, carried and constructed to plans drawn up by generations and approved by time

Opposite
HARD LINES
Near Banaz
The face of a man hardened for survival on the mountain. He offers tea and conversation to strangers – a brief flowering of generosity and wisdom and grief, born of struggle

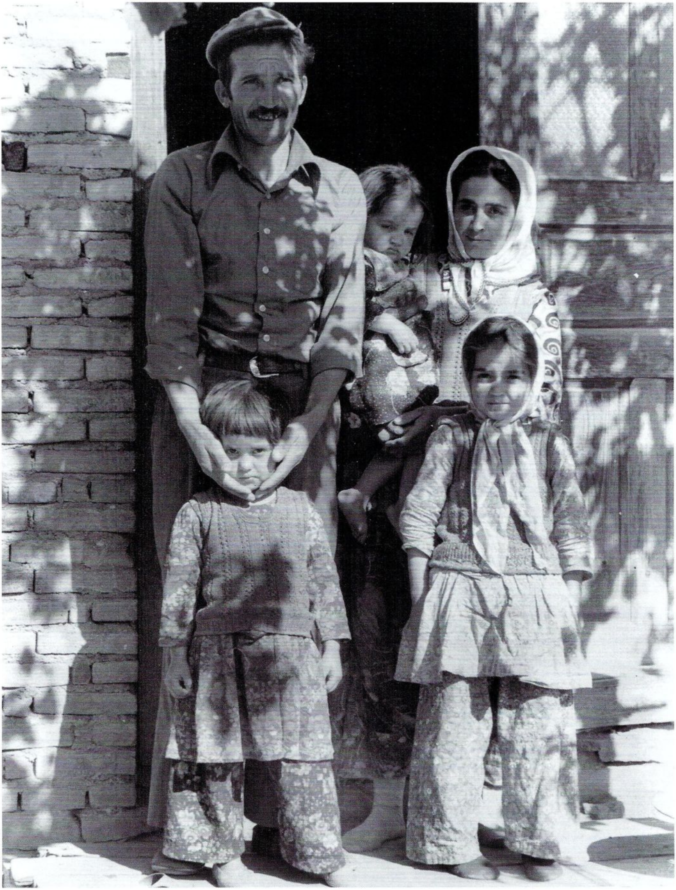
STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

PITCHER PERFECT

There are no taps. There are fountains, wells, rainwater cisterns, buckets or pots to fill, and women or children to carry them back home. These tinned-copper jugs take water wherever it is needed around the house

OUR HOSTS

Mehmet and family, outside their half-built home. They took us in when we were tired, fed us when we were hungry, and shared their lives up in the mountains. They are rose-growers and showed us their rose-oil still. 'Come in spring and you will smell the roses from five fountains away.'



CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

THE SADDLE-MAKER

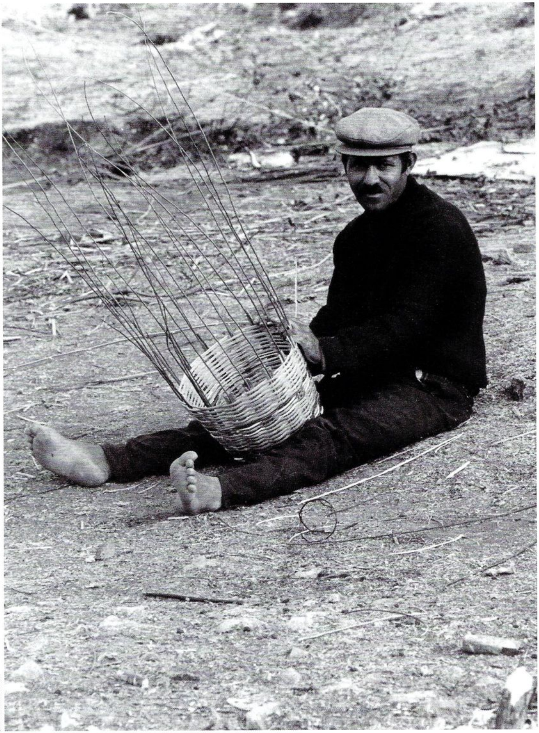
A master works with slow, concentrated grace, silent and at one with his medium. He says there isn't much demand for new saddles any more. He makes a living repairing old ones.

His tiny workshop has everything he needs, neatly stacked: sturdy shaped wood for the solid frames, slender slats to give them strength, sacks of straw for the filling, and cured skins and canvas to hold it in. The workbench is smooth and his tools are dark with use and age.

One splendid, beautifully formed new saddle sits hopefully in his window while he restores a battered, cracked, lumpy old specimen to some form of useful life

Donkey saddles are not made for comfort, either for man or beast. They are hard and unyielding on the back of the donkey and on the backside of any rider. They need a blanket underneath to stop them rubbing the donkey's back raw.

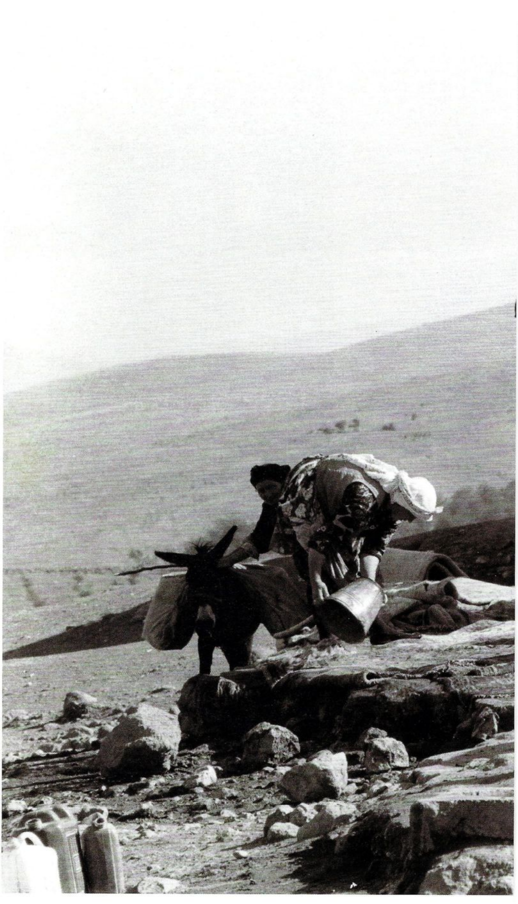
The saddles are made for carrying loads, sometimes larger than the donkeys themselves. Once you have been initiated into one of the rival schools of loading and learnt the mysterious arrangement of the ropes, the requisite knots, the intricacies of balance, your donkey will be ready, if not always willing, to carry your baggage across whatever unlikely terrain you choose to lead it



STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

BAREFOOT AND FREE

This man and his family were camped outside a village in a rag-scattered thicket of prickly shrubs next to the graveyard, a spot avoided by all but ghosts, evil influences and gypsies. They make baskets and sieves, buy and sell animals, and play at weddings, dancing to saz, fiddle and drum. The road is their home. Campfires on waste ground, laughter in shadows, exile, skirting walls, meetings, hostility: that's home for them



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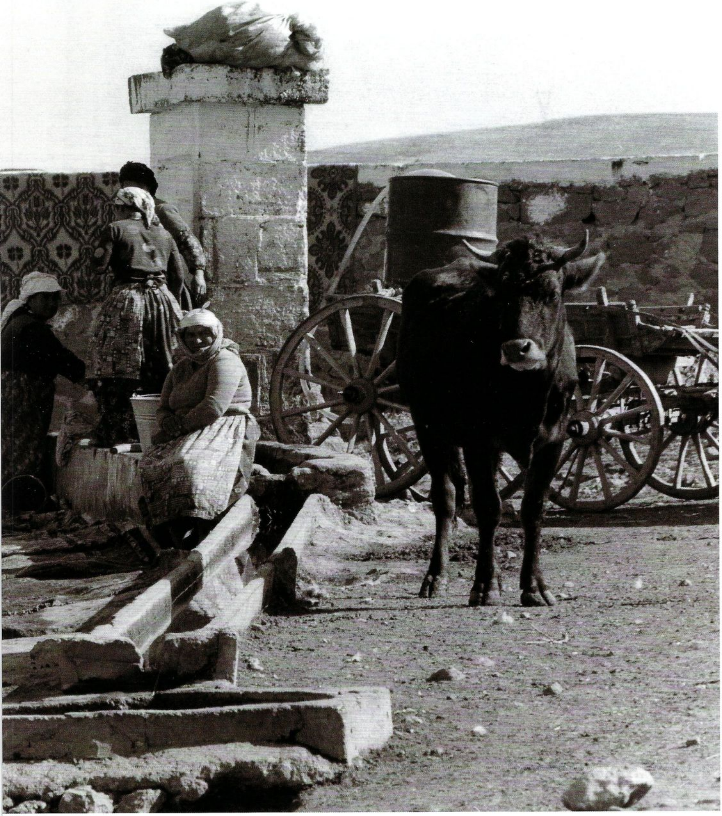
THE FOUNTAIN
Büyükoturak, near Banaz The fountain is the heart of the village for animals and humans alike, a source of drinking water shared by all. It is a meeting place, a washroom, a watering hole, a laundry. Here the women meet and the gossip also flows – a familiar scene that greets us as we enter many a village



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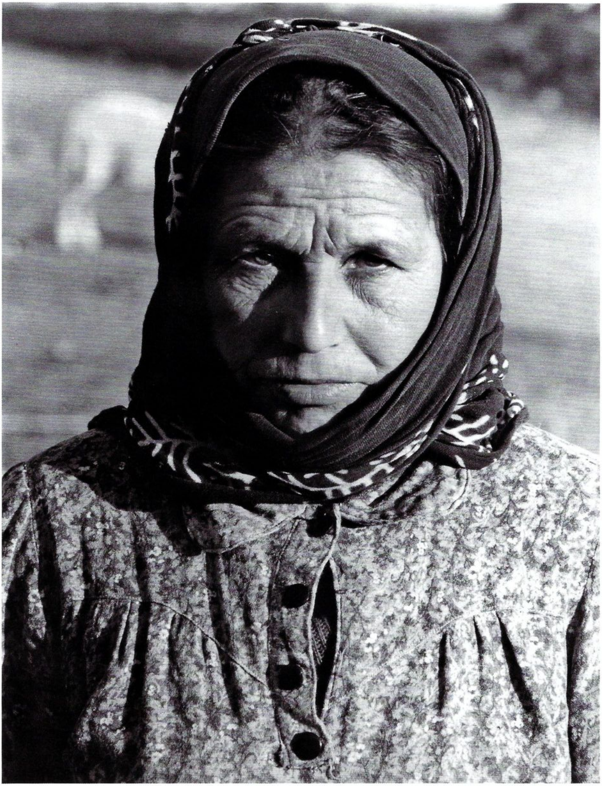


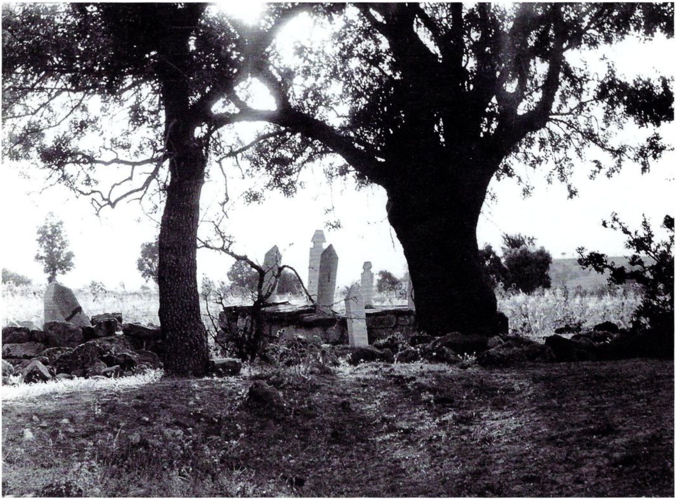
STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

WOOL-GATHERING

We slip into the village at sunset against the traffic of jingling sheep, pattering past in the opposite direction. Their shepherd's stiff felt cape is stained red and blue with a date, a name and stars. They'll return, plump with mountain grass, from a night of pine breeze and wolf-scent, of fire-dancing shadows, to escape the heat in darkened barns

RAMAZAN'S WIFE

She takes care of us, the guests on the mud roof talking to Ramazan, her husband. She sends daughters out with trays of food, then fruit, then tea. Between chores she squats at the edge of the lamplight to listen to our tales. Next morning before breakfast, she sings a lullaby as she milks the cow



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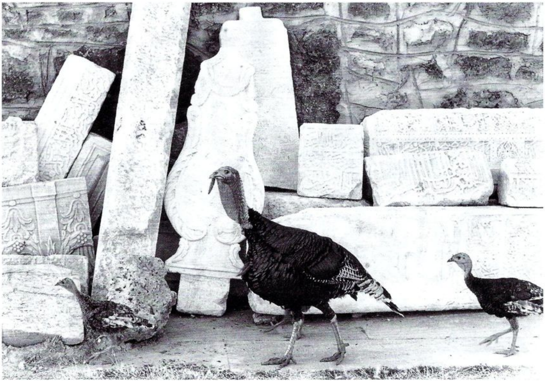
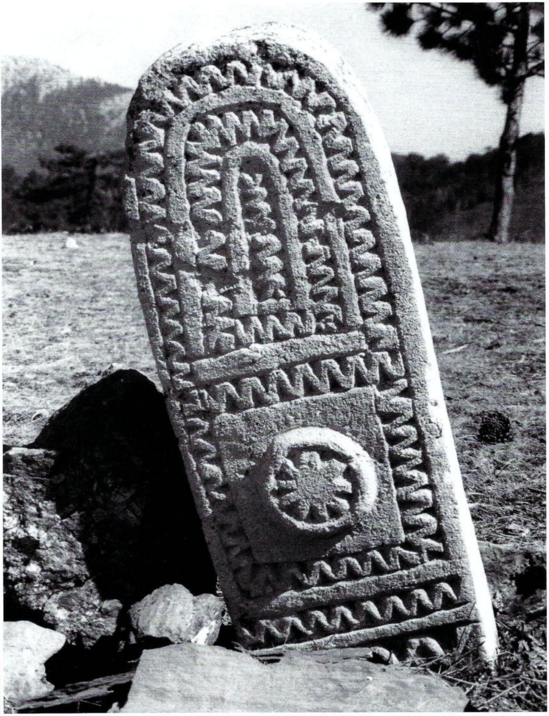


STEPHEN SCOFFHAM

A FOREIGN LAND
We pass a country graveyard in the middle of nowhere. These must have been people of substance. Their tombstones seem lost in this peasant field, struggling to stay erect. The fez proclaims their status, boasting of Ottoman ranks long forgotten, with inscriptions no one can read. Like the villagers, we won't stop here. We don't want to disturb them. Death like the past is a foreign country, near but inscrutable

TURKEY TROTTING
Everywhere in Turkey, history lies around unremarkably. Turkeys strut among tombstones and children play round fallen pillars



CHRISTOPHER TRILLO

TOMBSTONE ON A SUMMER PASTURE

Dedegöl Dağı He lies up there among the seasons, remembered by a stone, admired by chance by a camera. All that's left of a man at the hub of the endless succession: the reborn sun and shrinking snow, the fountains flow again and stain the soil with life, roots push and suck, worms at their business among the stones.

The village climbs to its summer home, grown grandchildren of this man, echoes of his life, here for a season. They leave before the first frost and the stone stands alone again, the bare idea of a man, picked clean of time. The snows descend, the fountains freeze, roots are stilled and beetles silenced beneath the shrieking pines and wolf-tracks

THE GRAVEYARD

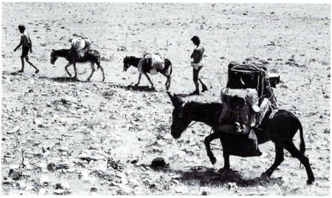
When I return to my stock and become earth
I will be a flower and adorn my grave.
The mountains wear green and the clouds cry.
I will roll in the heavens and give voice.

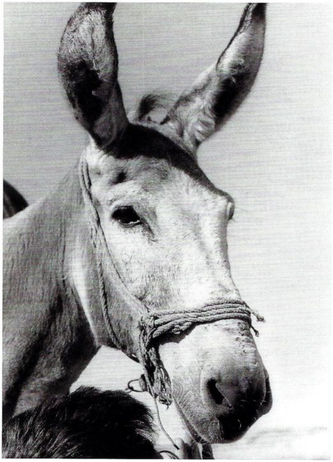
When my body fuses with the soil
I will be one with all creation.
Neither jealousy nor enmity will remain.
I will join my enemies.

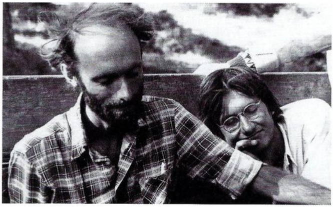
When I leave myself, my malice and hate
Will be converted to beauty for everyone.
My body is earth, my spirit is sun.
The air and the rain awaken my feelings.

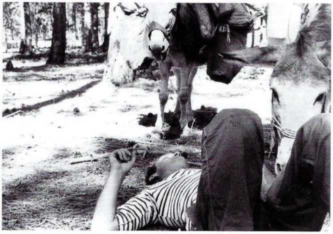
Minds measure and cut the world.
They sift and select their domains.
This world is transitory, they camp and move on.
Veysel says, 'Come let's make peace.'

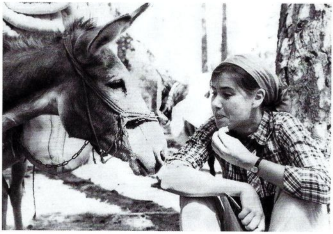
Aşık Veysel (1894–1973)











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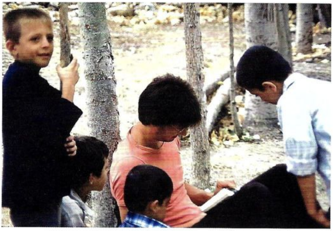
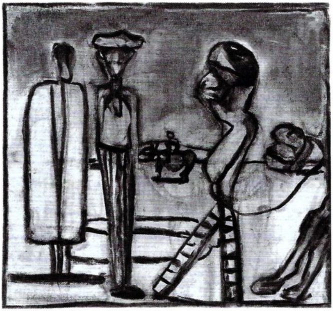
A LIFE WITH DONKEYS
Top left *The rigour of the world rendered down to the elemental: to hunger and thirst and exhaustion and fear, to food and water and rest and joy*
Top right *'King Trevor' receives tribute and makes grand plans.*
Centre *Exhausted donketeers – the end of the trail*
Above *The donkeys inspect John. Is he edible? Has he got a straw hat?*
Above right *And what is our friend Alice Dugdale eating? Perhaps we could share it*
Right *Artist with admirers: Simon at work on his sketchbook*

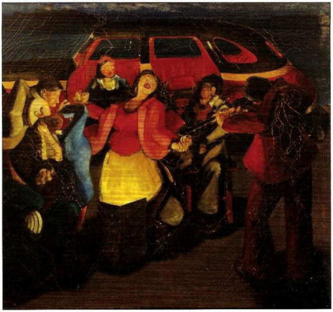


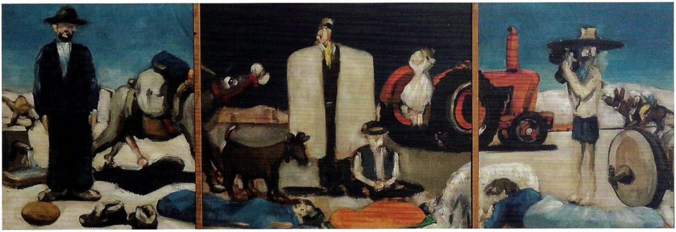
ALONG FOR THE RIDE?

Donkey's years later, could we – or anyone else – repeat this adventure? Four decades have flown. Times have changed. We have changed. No one can step into the same donkey trek twice. But if you are tempted to follow in our hoofprints, here are some questions to consider.

Can you speak Turkish?
You will be travelling through people's villages, pastures, fields and forests – you can't do it without them. They have much to teach you.







PHOTOGRAPH: MICHELE CADE

What about fellow travellers?
Compatibility is all. A plan is not essential, but a shared aim and shared ideas about the journey are. A small party is more cohesive and less intrusive. A turcophone female would have given us insights into the private, female side of an outwardly very masculine world.

Are there donkeys available?
No donkeys, no trek. Find a livestock market in a small town. Check out sanctuaries willing to sell or rent. Enquire in villages. Bear in mind that they will need tack, feed, saddles, stabling, a farrier. Never forget that you are responsible for their wellbeing.

Are you fit and resilient?
Can you cope with the unexpected, occasional suspicion, extreme heat, extreme hospitality, requests to sing, dance and tell stories? Are you happy to sleep under the stars? To build a campfire and to cook on it? Do villages still have guest rooms, and do travellers still have an unquestioned right to hospitality? As it was for us, this is for you to find out; old traditions die hard.

Finally, the best advice?
Apart from to say, "Go 40 years ago," the best advice would be to ignore any advice. Expect to make mistakes and to learn from them. It will be your way of fitting into this extraordinary environment and engaging with its (mostly) wonderful workings.

Christopher Trillo's 'Trans-Anatolian Quadruped Society' is due to be published by Cornucopia Books in 2022

CAPTURING THE MOMENT
This page *Expressive Anatolian scenes by the artist Simon Nicholas, one of the three donketeers, now based in Oslo. His sketches would prove a rich resource for oil paintings.*
Top left *'Figures in a Landscape', charcoal on paper (26cm x 25cm)*
Top right *Gypsies singing, dancing and playing in 'Alem', oil on canvas (160cm x 175cm)*
Above *The triptych 'Writing a Diary, Taking a Photograph', oil on wood (32cm x 70cm). For exhibitions and Selected Works 1978–81, see simonnicholas.com*

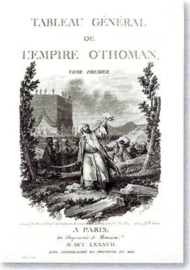
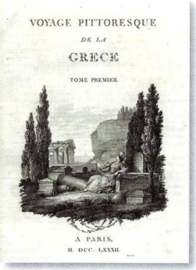


TABLEAU GÉNÉRAL
DE
L'EMPIRE OTHOMAN,
TOME PREMIER.

A PARIS,
De l'Imprimerie de Monsieur.
M. DCC. LXXXVII.
AVEC APPROBATION ET PRIVILÈGE DU ROI



VOYAGE PITTORESQUE
DE LA
GRECE
TOME PREMIER.

A PARIS,
M. DCC. LXXXII.

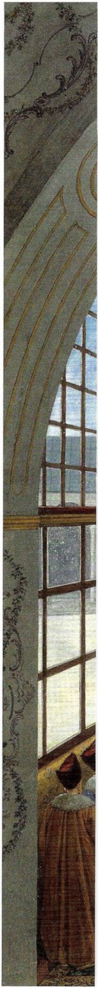
BEHIND PALACE DOORS

THE MOST IMPORTANT VISUAL RECORD OF LIFE AT THE TOPKAPI IS THE MAGNUM OPUS OF AN ENIGMATIC DRAGOMAN, MOURADGEA IGNATIUS D'OHSSON (1740–1807). PHILIP MANSEL INTRODUCES A NEW BOOK THAT RESCUES FROM OBSCURITY BOTH MOURADGEA AND THE SUMPTUOUS ILLUSTRATIONS HE COMMISSIONED

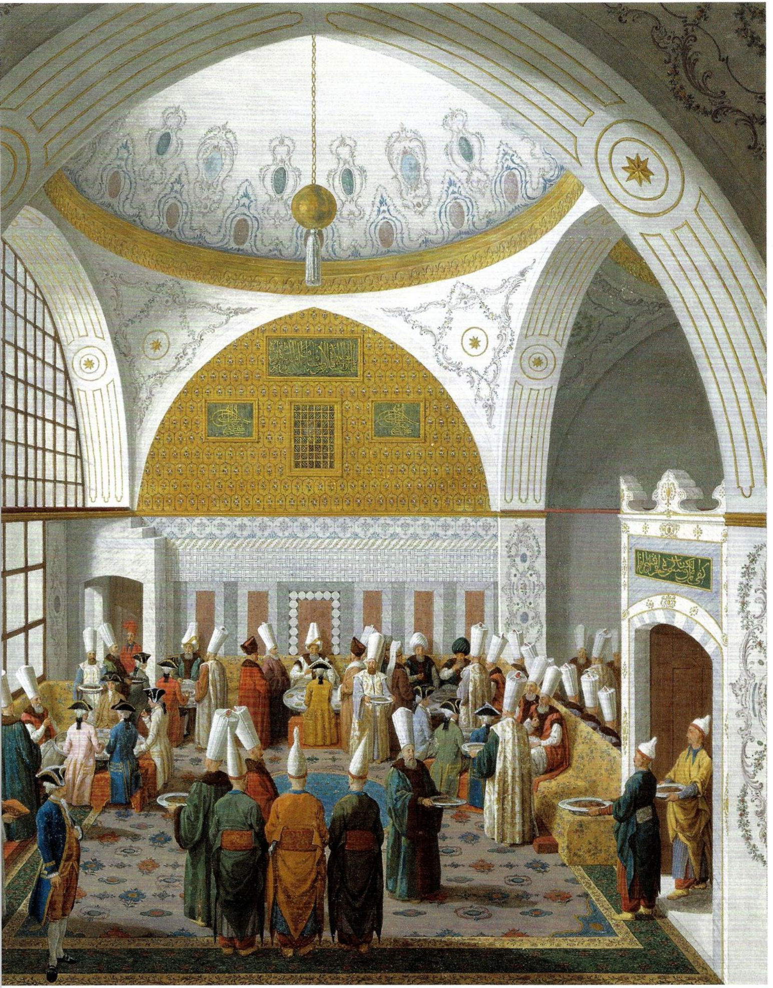
ABOVE: WINDOWS ON THE EAST
Two first-hand accounts of the Ottoman Empire appeared in Paris in the 1780s. Both authors enjoyed royal patronage, but they took very different stances. 'Tableau général de l'Empire othoman', by Mouradgea d'Ohsson, was a sympathetic guide to court life, politics and customs. The frontispiece of his first volume, published in 1787 (above left), was a pointed riposte to the fiercely anti-Turkish 'Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce' (1782) by a future French ambassador to the Sublime Porte, Auguste, Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier (above right). Volumes II and III of Mouradgea's 'Tableau général' would follow in 1790 and, posthumously, in 1820

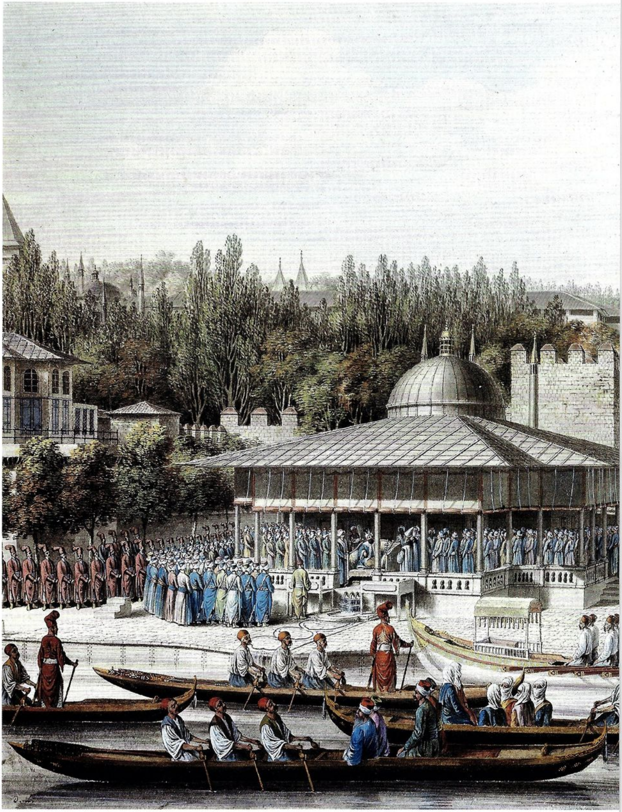
RIGHT: LUNCH WITH THE GRAND VIZIER
Mouradgea commissioned this painting from Louis-Nicolas de L'Espinasse (1734–1808) for his 'Tableau général'. The grand vizier (centre, his back to the wall) is lunching with a European envoy (his back to the viewer) in the divan chamber of the Topkapı. The shadowy figure of the Sultan listens in from behind a grille high up in the wall. As dragoman, or official interpreter, to the Swedish ambassador, Mouradgea would have been familiar with the scene: dragomans were key power brokers in any negotiations. De L'Espinasse based this impeccable rendering – in pen and grey ink, watercolour and gouache – on a painting by the Ottoman court artist Konstantin Kapıdağlı. It would become the basis for Plate 232 in Mouradgea's 'Tableau général'

THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN THIS ARTICLE ARE FROM 'ENLIGHTENING EUROPE ON ISLAM AND THE OTTOMANS', BY CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY. FOR DETAILS, SEE PAGE 102



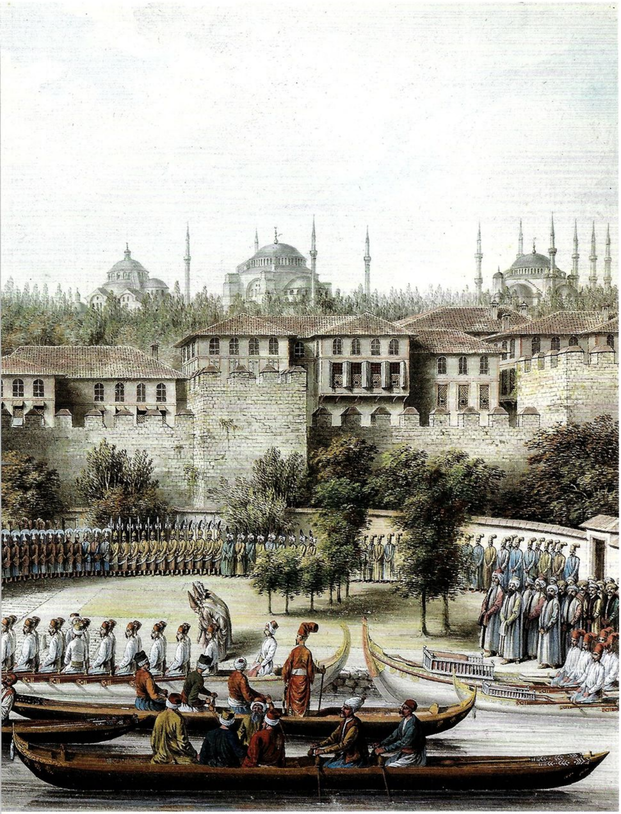
NATIONALMUSEUM, STOCKHOLM



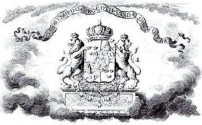


PRIVATE COLLECTION: PHOTO OVE KANEBERG

PRESENTATION TO THE SULTAN OF THE GRAND ADMIRAL AND HIS SQUADRON COMMANDERS IN A PALACE KIOSK
The departure and return of the Ottoman fleet were always marked by a solemn ceremony in the presence of the Sultan in the grounds of the Topkapı. Mouradgea informs us that the Grand Admiral (Kapudan Pasha) is setting off on a tour of the Aegean Islands. He has stepped off his white ceremonial barge to be robed and to prostrate himself before the Sultan,



enthroned in the Yalı Kiosk at the entrance to the Golden Horn. Built in 1599, the long-vanished kiosk would have been visible with a telescope from the Swedish embassy, where Mouradgea worked. A valuable record of Ottoman court ritual and palace architecture, this view (Plate 172 in the 'Tableau général') is again the work of de L'Espinasse based on a now-lost painting by Kapıdağlı. On the skyline are the domes of Ayairene, Ayasofya and the Sultan Ahmet ('Blue') Mosque



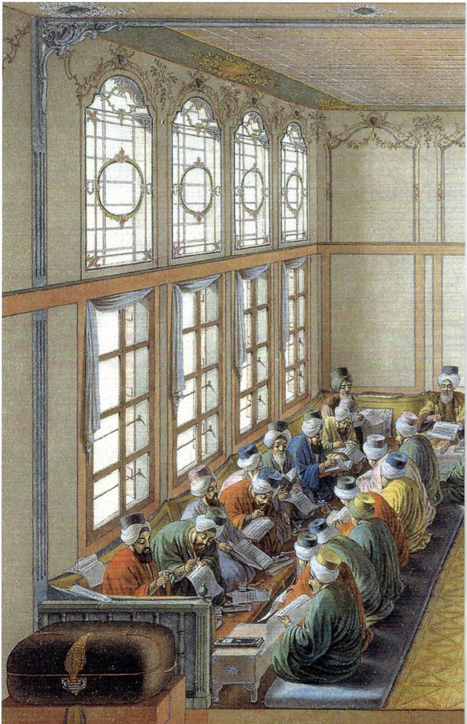
AU ROI DE SUEDE.

The *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman* is a masterpiece: three richly illustrated volumes of insights into Ottoman manners, beliefs and ethics by an intriguing – but undeservedly obscure – man of letters, Ignatius Mouradgea d'Ohsson.

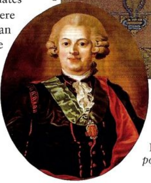
The story starts in 1709 when Ahmed III invited Charles XII, King of Sweden, to take refuge in the Ottoman capital after his defeat in battle by Peter the Great of Russia. He and his retinue of courtiers remained as guests of the Sultan for five years.

The experience ignited a fascination with all things Ottoman among Charles's large entourage, and led to a new understanding in the West of the aesthetics and politics of a great Islamic empire. Seventy-five years later, this interest would inspire Mouradgea's *Tableau général*, described by the historian Carter Vaughn Findley in his new book, *Enlightening Europe*, as "the most authoritative, most profusely illustrated work of the Enlightenment on Islam and the Ottoman Empire".

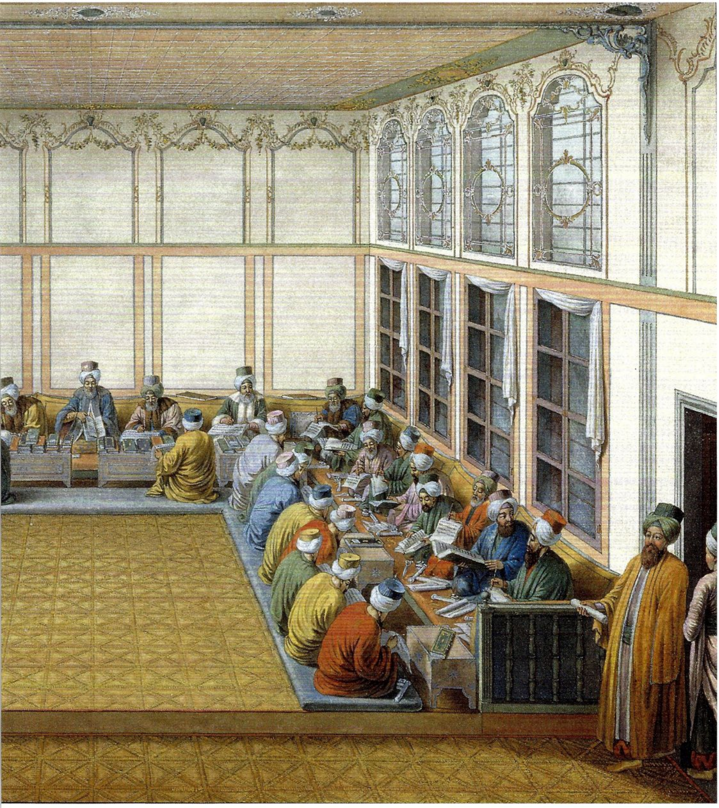
Ottoman court art was crucial to the *Tableau général*. After moving to Paris in 1784, Mouradgea commissioned his plates from the best Paris engravers. These were largely based on contemporary Ottoman paintings – factual but somewhat naive – subtly redrawn by renowned French artists. We know that Mouradgea's father-in-law, Abraham Kuleliyan, a powerful banker, took "42 large pictures" from Istanbul to Paris for him – all now lost. Fortunately, many of the French paintings (several shown on these pages) still survive.



PRIVATE COLLECTION



TOP LEFT *The Swedish royal coat of arms as its appears in the 'Tableau général'. Mouradgea dedicated the first volume to 'Gustav III, King by God's Grace of the Swedes, Goths and Vandals'*
LEFT *Mouradgea in 'Swedish dress' wearing the Royal Order of Vasa, portrayed by Lorens Pasch the Younger (1733–1805)*



NATIONALMUSEUM, STOCKHOLM

ABOVE 'BUREAU PUBLIC' *This coloured drawing by de L'Espinasse was the basis for Mouradgea's 'Bureau Public', presumed to be based on an original by Kapıdağlı. The classic Ottoman Baroque interior is flooded with light from two tiers of windows. A rare illustration of the inner workings of Ottoman bureaucracy, it shows scribes hard at work in the Office of the Imperial Divan. Bearded senior clerics consult documents while seated against the walls on high cushions. In front of them, apprentices are busy writing manuscripts, their implements set out on low chests. Presiding in the centre is the chef de bureau with his advisers. The image was engraved as Plate 178 of the 'Tableau général'*

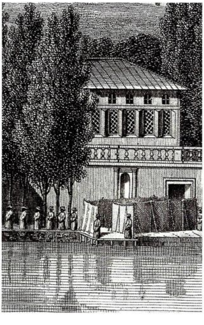
MOURADGEA D’OHSSON: THE ULTIMATE COSMOPOLITE

Some people belong to one country. Ignace Mouradgea d’Ohsson belonged to three: the Ottoman Empire, where he was born in 1740; France, where he died in 1807; and Sweden, for which he worked for most of his life. His careers were as varied as his identities.

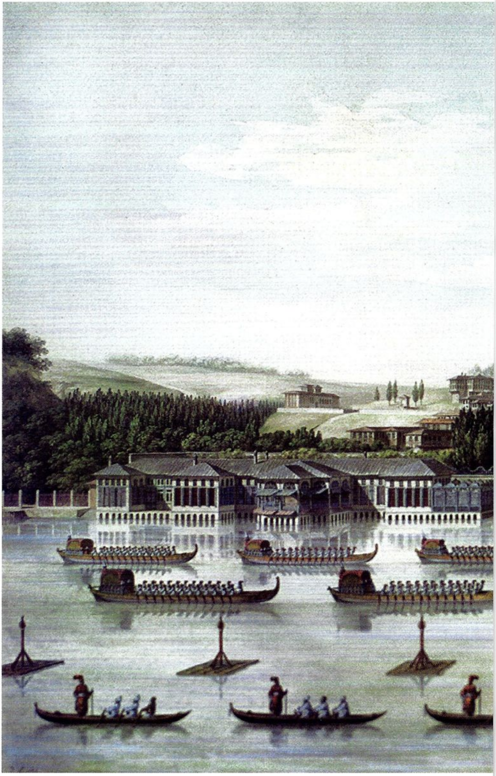
Son of a wealthy Armenian merchant and his French wife (Claire Pagy, of a Levantine family from Smyrna, some of whom still live there), he became a merchant, interpreter, diplomat, writer and political reformer. He was at once Armenian, Catholic (some Armenians acknowledged the authority of the Pope), Ottoman, French and Swedish. From 1763 to 1784 he was dragoman for the Swedish Legation in Istanbul under the brothers Gustaf and Ulric Celsing, who succeeded each other as minister between 1750 and 1780. Their superb collection of Istanbul views by Jan van der Steen was recently sold to a Qatar museum.

Sweden and the Ottoman Empire had been allies since the 1650s, as both powers dreaded Russian expansion. Dragomans, like diplomats, were bridges between countries, and Mouradgea helped establish diplomatic relations between Spain and the Ottoman Empire.

Ennobled in 1780 by King Gustav III of Sweden, Mouradgea, a freemason with many “brothers”, acquired a new identity as “M le chevalier d’Ohsson”, from his uncle’s sobriquet “Tosun”, Turkish for “robust” or “bull-like”. He was one of the first, and most gifted, Istanbullus to achieve the goal of transforming into a Western European. In Paris in 1784 he met the King, ▷p94

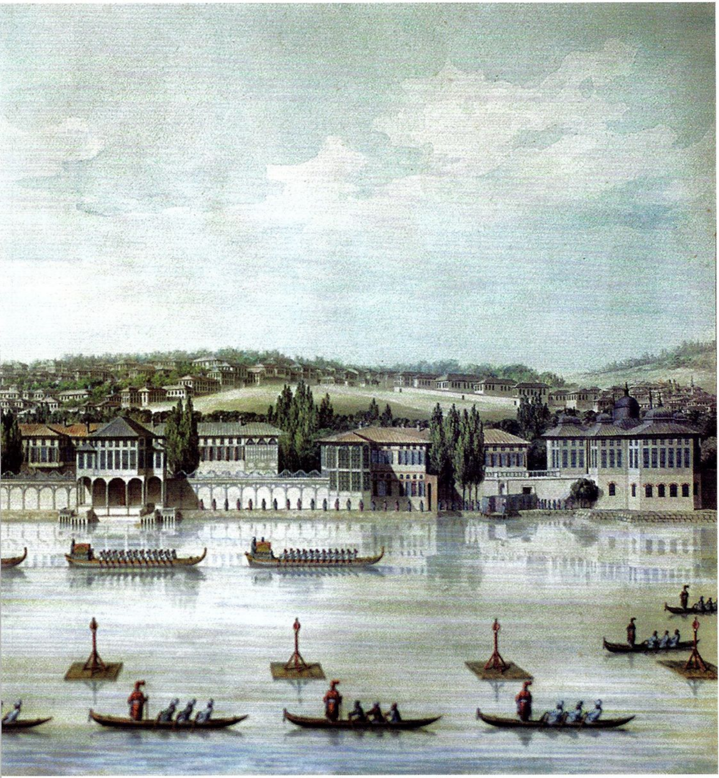


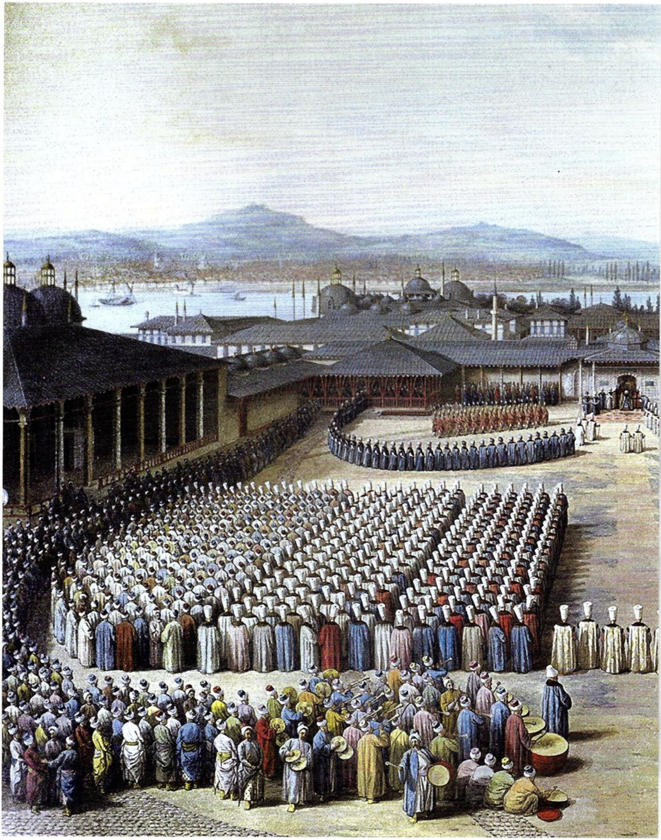
CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY



FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

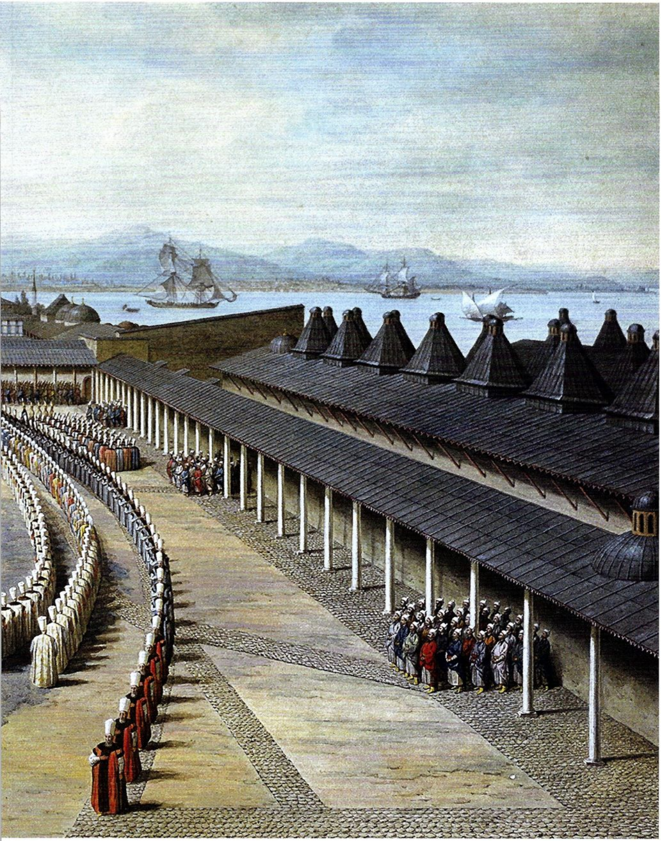
BEŞIKTAŞ, THE SULTAN’S SUMMER PALACE ON THE BOSPHORUS, AND HIS LADIES’ CAIQUES
This painting by de L’Espinasse records the annual exodus from the Topkapı in May. A flotilla of caiques, each with two dozen oarsmen, bears the concubines in curtained kiosks past the pavilions of the Palace of Beşiktaş, on the shores of the Bosphorus, where the court will spend the summer. The women will alight at the jealously guarded entrance to the harem (left), seen in a detail from Plate 169 of the ‘Tableau’. Kapıdağlı, no doubt the source of this highly accurate depiction, was able to paint murals in the Topkapı’s empty harem in their absence



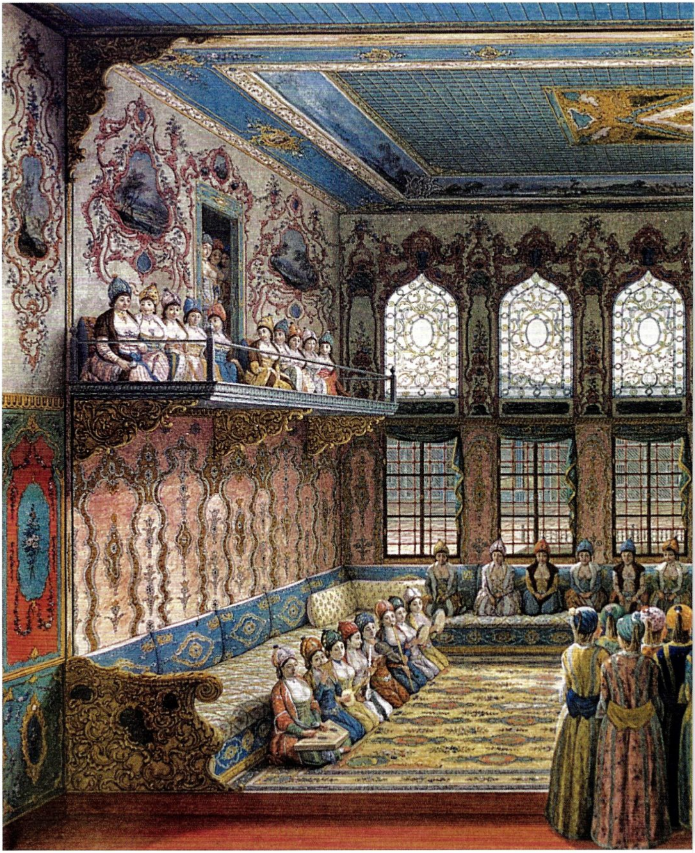


FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

THE MUAYEDE CEREMONY, TOPKAPI PALACE *In a ceremony of magnificent precision, an army of dignitaries pays homage to the Sultan, enthroned at the far end of the Second Court. A Janissary band in the foreground provides rousing music. On the right are*

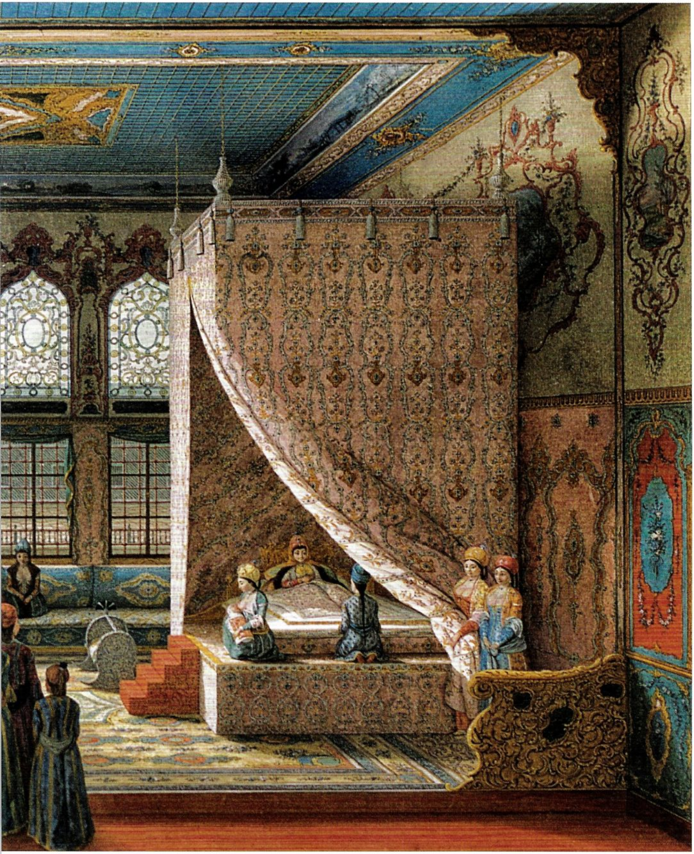


the many chimneys of the palace kitchens. De L'Espinasse clearly worked from a detailed original, presumably by Kapıdağlı, whose own oil painting of the ceremony hangs in the Topkapı. It is uncertain why the scene was never engraved for the 'Tableau'

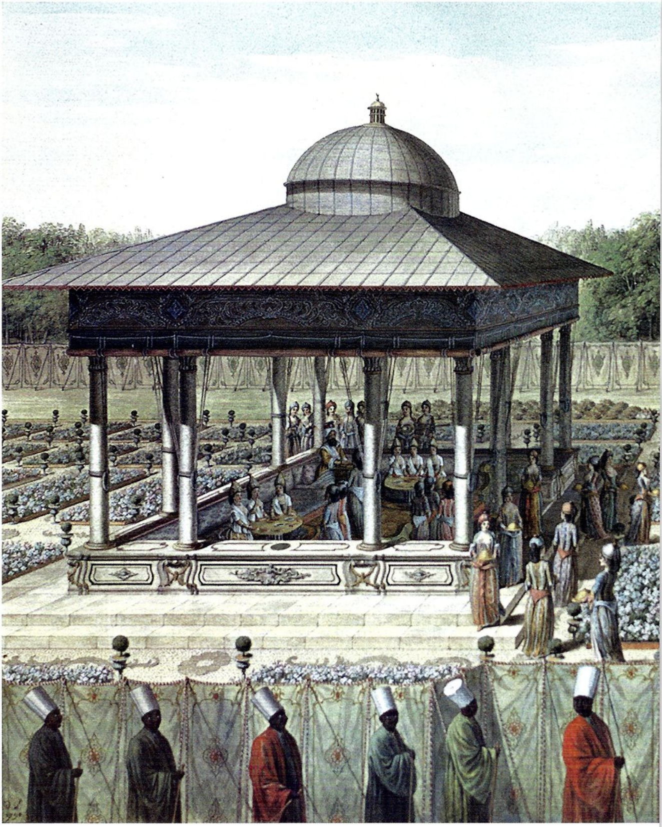


FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

CELEBRATING A ROYAL BIRTH *Women musicians play for a new mother and palace ladies in the Harem. Mouradgea's detailed description was no*

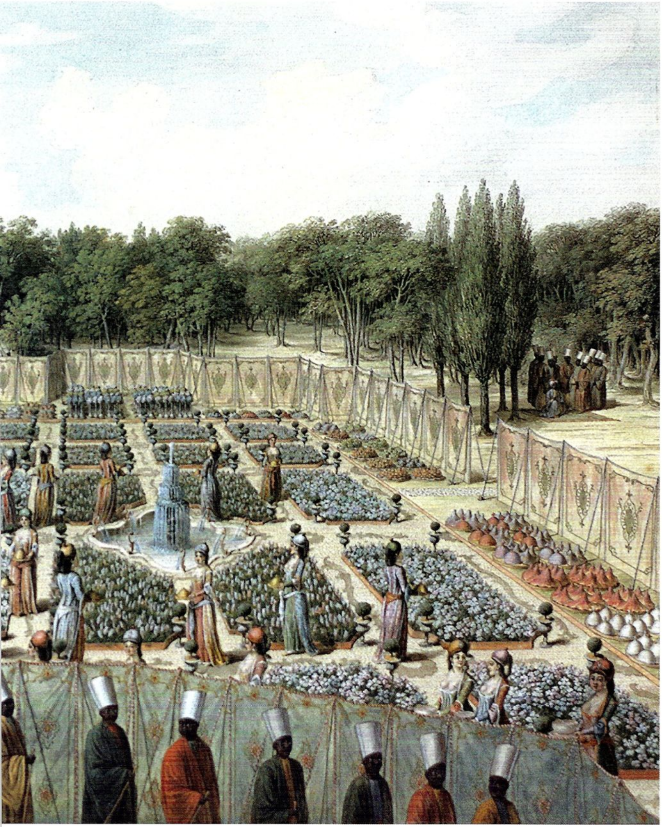


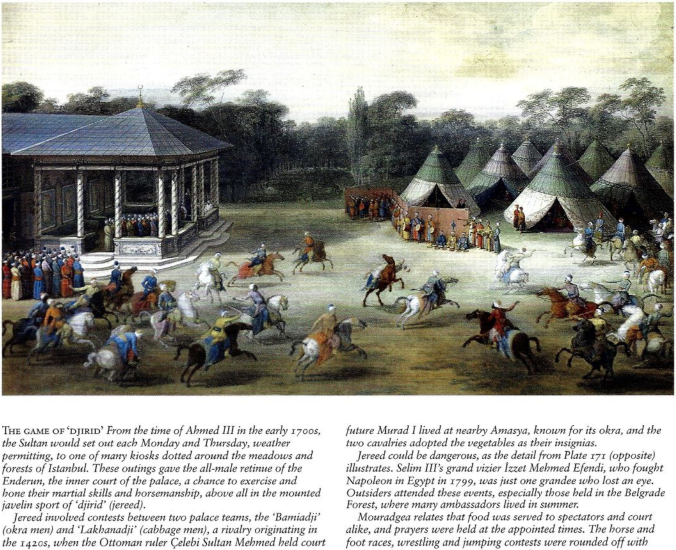
doubt gleaned from the Chief Black Eunuch, whose financier was his father-in-law. De L'Espinasse clearly relished depicting the sumptuous chamber



FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

AN IMPERIAL RETREAT *Harem ladies serve the Sultan and his family a meal in a garden kiosk. The scene is concealed from prying eyes by a wall of curtains patrolled by black eunuchs. De L'Espinasse's painting, signed 'DL, 1790', is the only known record of the occasion: the plate is missing in every copy of the 'Tableau'. Perhaps it was lost in the 30 years before the third volume was published*





FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

THE GAME OF 'DJIRID' *From the time of Ahmed III in the early 1700s, the Sultan would set out each Monday and Thursday, weather permitting, to one of many kiosks dotted around the meadows and forests of Istanbul. These outings gave the all-male retinue of the Enderun, the inner court of the palace, a chance to exercise and hone their martial skills and horsemanship, above all in the mounted javelin sport of 'djirid' (jereed).*

Jereed involved contests between two palace teams, the 'Bamiadji' (okra men) and 'Lakhanadji' (cabbage men), a rivalry originating in the 1420s, when the Ottoman ruler Çelebi Sultan Mehmed held court at Merzifon in northern Anatolia, famed for its cabbages. His son the future Murad I lived at nearby Amasya, known for its okra, and the two cavalries adopted the vegetables as their insignias.

Jereed could be dangerous, as the detail from Plate 171 (opposite) illustrates. Selim III's grand vizier İzzet Mehmed Efendi, who fought Napoleon in Egypt in 1799, was just one grandee who lost an eye. Outsiders attended these events, especially those held in the Belgrade Forest, where many ambassadors lived in summer.

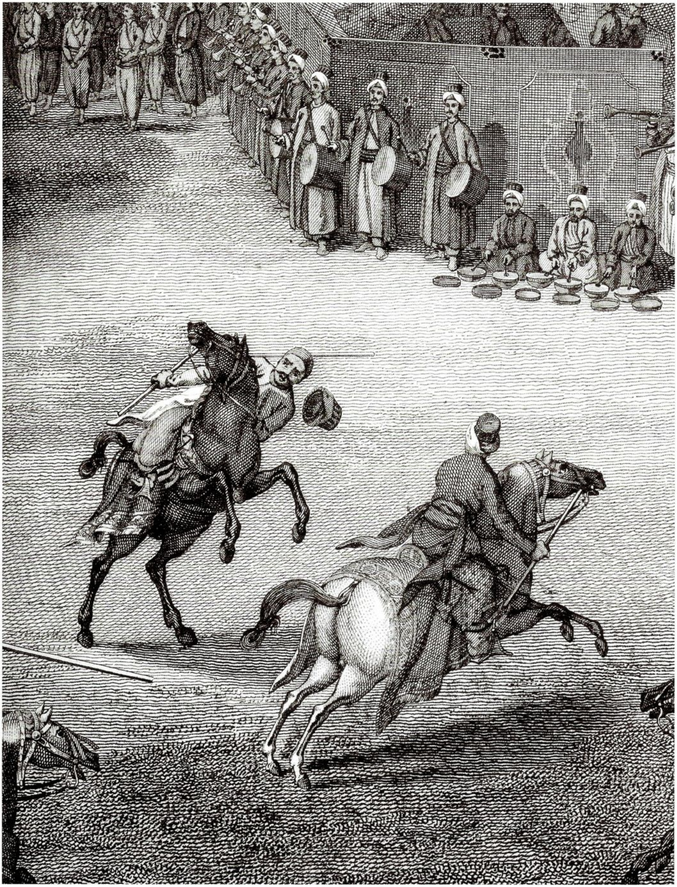
Mouradgea relates that food was served to spectators and court alike, and prayers were held at the appointed times. The horse and foot races, wrestling and jumping contests were rounded off with singing, and provocative performances by Greek dance troupes

◁ *p86* a great patron of the arts, who was visiting his friends Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Gustav III encouraged Mouradgea's plans for a book on the Ottoman Empire and gave him the idea of showing portraits of sultans hanging in a tree – literally a family tree. Mouradgea's opus, like many others on the Ottoman Empire, received official French patronage, and probably subsidies: France was the oldest ally of both the Ottoman Empire and Sweden.

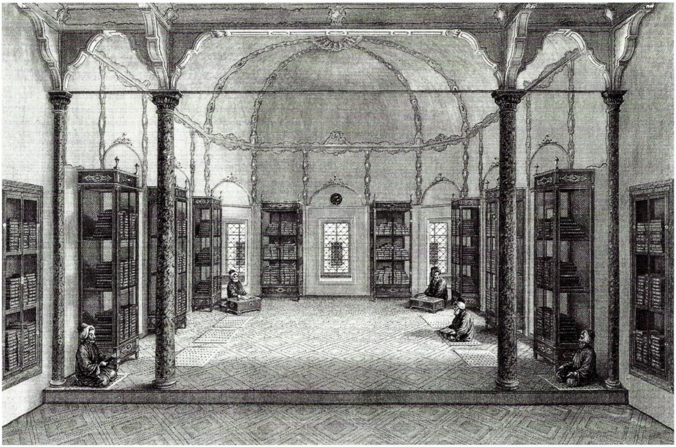
Driven by his exceptional energy and versatility, and the financial backing of his wealthy father-in-law, Abraham Kuleliyan, from 1784 Mouradgea worked on the *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman*, which Carter Findley rightly admires for its design and illustrations, as well as its abundance of accurate information. The Abbé Parent de Vassy, from the Sorbonne, was assigned to edit the text, smoothing out Mouradgea's French prose.

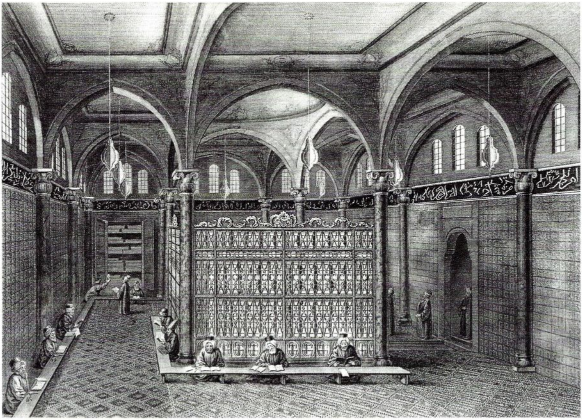
His inside information reveals the history and structure of the Ottoman palace, government, army and navy, and explains the role of the *ulema* (religious scholars) and the many dervish orders and their relations with Christians – who were more often humiliated, by

▷ *p100*

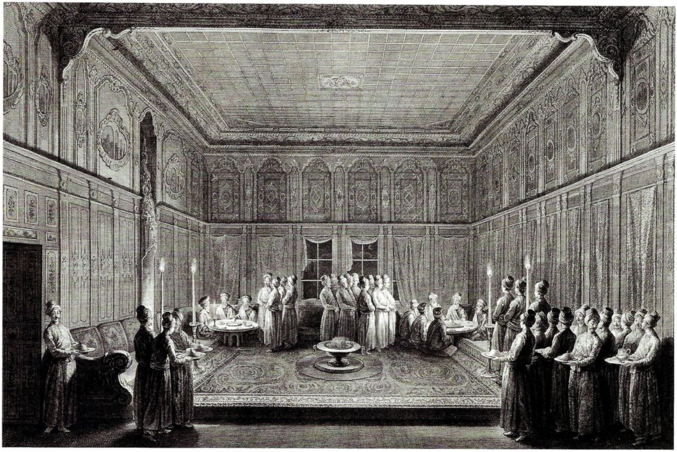


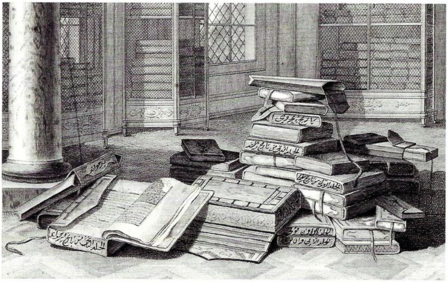
CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY





ALL IMAGES: CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY



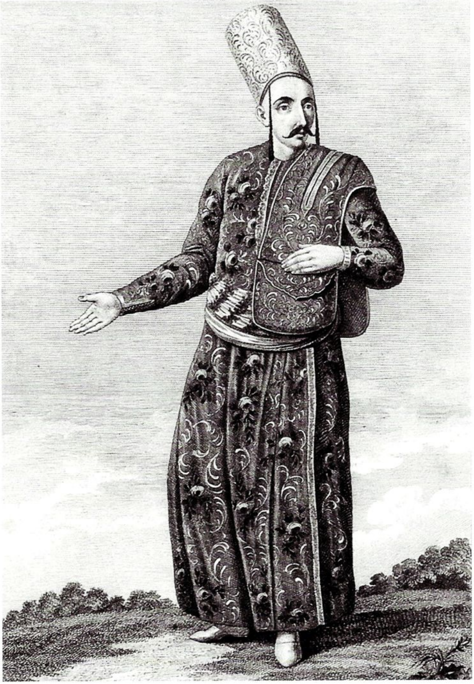


Above The grand vizier breaking his fast with ministers in Ramazan
It was a long-standing custom for grand viziers to host members of the ruling elite on all but seven nights of Ramazan. The highest officers of state, seen here in Plate 39 of the 'Tableau', would attend the fast-breaking on the third night. Based on the work of Kapıdağlı, who decorated many of the rooms in the Topkapı, this engraving of the candlelit scene marries Ottoman accuracy of detail to French mastery of light and shade

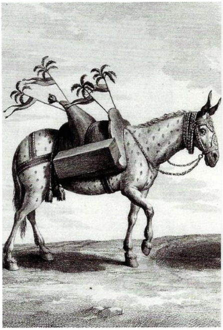
Left Mouradgea's books
Plate 39 shows the books and manuscripts Mouradgea took to Paris for reference. His son Constantine would leave them to Lund University Library in 1850. The historian Carter Vaughn Findley, who examined them for his book 'Enlightening Europe', suggests they were insufficient for Mouradgea, whose writing was often propelled by the paintings he had commissioned from Kapıdağlı and other artists. This drawing is by Jean-Baptiste Hilaire, who accompanied the French ambassador, the Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, to Istanbul in 1782 and worked both for him and for Mouradgea

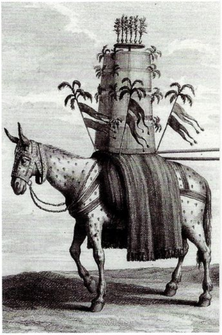
Opposite, top Abdülhamid I's Library
Plate 32 of the 'Tableau' carefully captures precise details of the new library built for Abdülhamid I, who was on the throne when Mouradgea left for Paris in 1784. Istanbul had some 35 public libraries, he wrote, each with as many as 5,000 manuscripts. The Topkapı housed a further 15,000 volumes

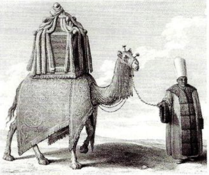
Opposite, bottom Raghib Pasha's library
Plate 33 of the 'Tableau' shows the innovative public library endowed by Koca Raghib Pasha, a noted intellecual and author who was grand vizier from 1757 to 1763. Mouradgea, then a young man, would have known him personally, as his father-in-law, Abraham Kuleliyan, was the pasha's financier



ALL IMAGES: CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY

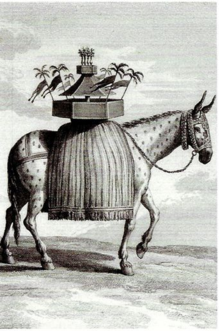


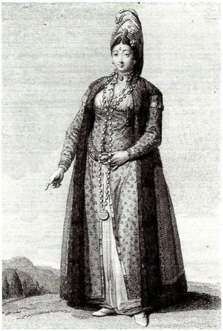


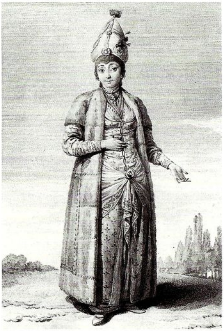


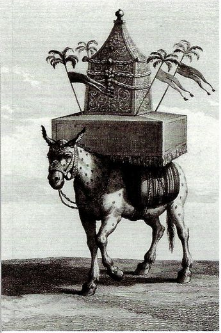
Above The Purse-Bearer
The 'Tchantadji', or Purse-Bearer (Plate 162), who accompanied the Sultan when he left the palace, bears an embroidered leather sack of gold and silver coins. Mouradgea took pains to illustrate and write about numerous offices of empire. Others include the 'reis efendi' (de facto foreign minister), the master of the wardrobe, the 'bostancı' (the gardeners, who in fact policed the city), the eunuchs guarding the harem, and the deaf-mutes who sat outside the door when the Sultan met his grand vizier

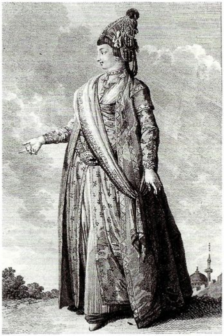
Right (top, centre and bottom)
Gifts to Mecca
Each year the Sultan appointed an official, the 'sürre emini', to bear treasure to Mecca and Medina. His departure from the palace remained one of the most magnificent ceremonies into the 20th century. These delightful drawings by Hilaire illustrate the extent to which the mules and camels were caparisoned. In Plate 48 (right) a camel is led symbolically by the Chief Black Eunuch, whose responsibilities included supervising the charitable foundations supporting the Holy Cities of Mecca and Medina

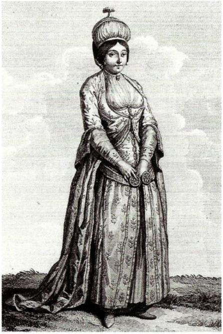


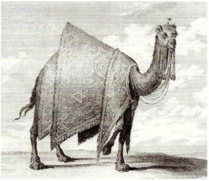












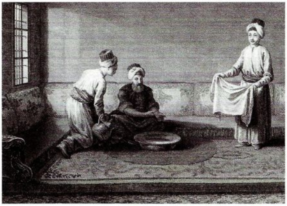
THIS PAGE **HOW OTTOMAN WOMEN DRESSED** *Mouradgea dedicated eight plates to women's fashions. His text includes a detailed description of their hairstyles and head coverings 'extending high above the head, and coming to a point with a tuft of silk, gold wire or fine pearls'. Elsewhere he notes regional variations such as black veils in Egypt and Syria. Of this group of Muslim women in Istanbul, three are noblewomen and one (bottom right) is a palace lady*
TOP LEFT *A woman of rank (Plate 75) dressed in a short-sleeved fur overgarment for winter, drawn by Hilaire, possibly in Istanbul*
TOP RIGHT *A woman in spring attire (Plate 76) by Jean-Jacques-François Le Barbier (1738–1826), who never visited the city and would have used originals supplied by Mouradgea*
BOTTOM LEFT *A drawing by Hilaire of a woman in summer attire, which still involved several layers of clothing (Plate 77)*
BOTTOM RIGHT *Mouradgea describes this woman (Plate 78) as 'Femme Esclave', a female slave. The artist is unknown. Similarly dressed figures are seen carrying trays of food to the Sultan in the garden scene on pages 92–93*

◁ *p94* insults and clothing prohibitions, than mistreated.

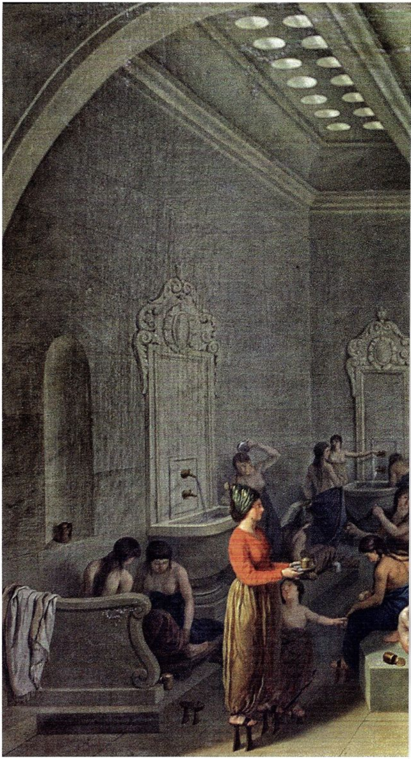
The *Tableau* was published in Paris in three splendid illustrated volumes in 1788, 1790 and – leapfrogging the publishing desert of the Revolution and the Empire – 1820. Like Mouradgea himself, the work was helped by the triangular alliance between France, Sweden and the Ottoman Empire, which – defying differences between Catholics and Protestants, as well as Christians and Muslims – was at its height during Mouradgea's years in Paris. The handsome Swedish Count Axel von Fersen was the lover of Marie Antoinette. Gustav III received an annual subsidy from France, and was planning an attack on Russia with Ottoman help.

The book was printed at the Imprimerie de Monsieur – "Monsieur" being Louis XVI's pro-Ottoman, pro-Gustavian brother, the Comte de Provence, later Louis XVIII. Politics, literature, the arts and personal tastes and ambitions all reflected and reinforced the Franco-Ottoman-Swedish alliance. Gustav read the first volume, which was dedicated to him, in 1788, perhaps as he sat on his Turkish divan in Haga, his favourite Neoclassical pavilion outside Stockholm, while planning his attack on Russia.

Even the frontispiece reflected the alliance. The future French ambassador to the Ottoman Empire, the Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, in an outburst of youthful Philhellenism, had published in 1782 the first volume of his *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, with a frontispiece showing a figure of Greece in chains, awaiting liberation by Russia. In a deliberate riposte, Mouradgea's frontispiece followed the official French policy of support for the Ottoman Empire. It shows the Prophet Mohammed in front of the Kaaba in Mecca, with a copy of the Koran in his hand. Islam, d'Ohsson asserted, was a rational religion with codified law, and the Empire was ready for reform under enlightened leadership. The book was shown to the young Selim III after his accession in 1789, to counteract the impact of the *Voyage pittoresque de la Grèce*, which the British ambassador had naturally drawn

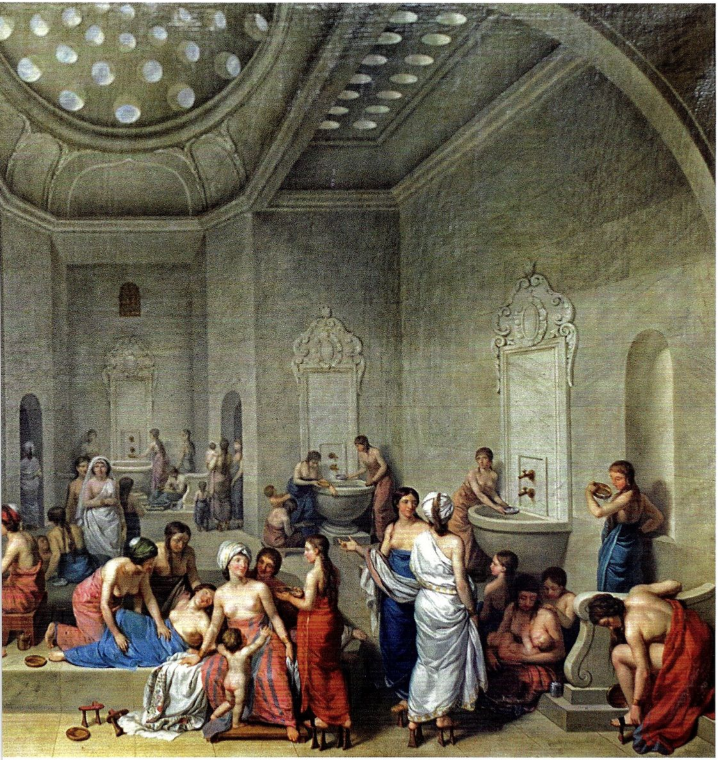


CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY



FALKENBERG COLLECTION, PHOTO ANNA ERIKSSON ALSTRIN

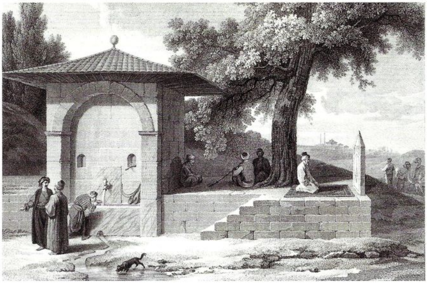
LEFT A MUSLIM GENTLEMAN AT HIS ABLUTIONS *Cleanliness could not wash away sin, Mouradgea noted, but was a prerequisite for prayer. Plate 12, redrawn by Hilaire from an Ottoman prototype, appears in the 'Tableau' together with Plate 13, 'The Public Baths' (above). Mouradgea's collaborator, the master engraver Charles-Nicolas Cochin, insisted that etching be used lightly to achieve subtle 'clair-obscur' and indicate colour*



ABOVE THE PUBLIC BATHS
Baths were taken 'two, three, or even four times a week', wrote Mouradgea. 'Every city, every town, every village, however poor, has its public bath.' Mouradgea's Istanbul-born wife, Eva, was the source of much of his knowledge of the baths, including the painful massage given to women after childbirth – Le Barbier depicts a new mother swathed in a blue cloth in the centre of this oil painting (Plate 13 of the 'Tableau'). The engraver Cochin, a classic Enlightenment figure, warned the Paris artists not to 'Frenchify' their work. Yet Le Barbier could not resist depicting his figures in the fashionable Neoclassical style.

Unlike the 'stark naked' bathers described by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who inspired Ingres' famous painting 'Le bain turc', the women here are for the most part covered – in red or blue 'Peschtumals of silk, linen and cotton'.

Plates 12 and 13 are illustrations of ritual cleanliness. To stress the role of decorum, the French text revived arcane terms with classical connotations – 'la lotion' for the washing, and 'lustration' to suggest the purification rites associated with ancient pagan sacrifices

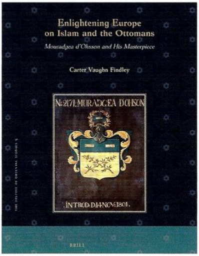


CARTER VAUGHN FINDLEY

ABOVE *This engraving of a 'namazgâh', an outdoor place of prayer (Plate 16), was probably based on a drawing Hilaire made during his travels in the Ottoman Empire*

OPPOSITE *Mouradgea's arrival in Paris in 1784 coincided with a visit by Gustav III of Sweden, who was so taken with the set of sultans' portraits shown to him by Mouradgea that he commissioned this Ottoman family tree. It should have been in the 'Tableau' but may have been too expensive to engrave. Mouradgea had been ennobled in 1780 – his Swedish crest graces the cover of Findley's book (see below)*

Enlightening Europe on Islam and the Ottomans: Mouradgea d'Ohsson and His Masterpiece, by Carter Vaughn Findley (Brill 2019, £66), is available from cornucopia.net/enlighteningeurope


Enlightening Europe on Islam and the Ottomans
Mouradgea d'Ohsson and His Masterpiece
Carter Vaughn Findley
Nº217L MURADGEA D'OHSON
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BRILL

to the attention of the Ottoman authorities.

The book's message was that the Ottoman Empire was not a lawless despotism, but a well-ordered state. It had vast resources, helped by foreign Muslims' acceptance of the authority of the Sultan as their Caliph. It needed only "one great man, we shall not cease to repeat it, to give this empire a new face": that man was the future Selim III, already in touch with Louis XVI, who would ascend to the throne in 1789.

The book was distinguished by the quality and abundance of its illustrations, all of which are reproduced here by Findley. They were mostly composed by two French artists, Nicolas de L'Espinasse and Jean-Baptiste Hilaire, from drawings by the Ottoman artist Konstantin Kapıdağlı that were supplied by Mouradgea. They were engraved in Paris, initially under the supervision of Charles-Nicolas Cochin, with the inscription APDR, "*avec privilège du roi*". They reflect the vitality of the unfamiliar world of Ottoman painters. Far from following a Muslim prohibition on paintings, wealthy pilgrims to Mecca often took painters with them to record the Holy Places. Sultans regularly had their portraits painted, as Selim III did by Kapıdağlı. Western view-painters living in Istanbul included Antoine van der Steen, who worked for the Swedish ambassador before 1780, and Luigi Mayer, who worked for the British ambassador before 1793.

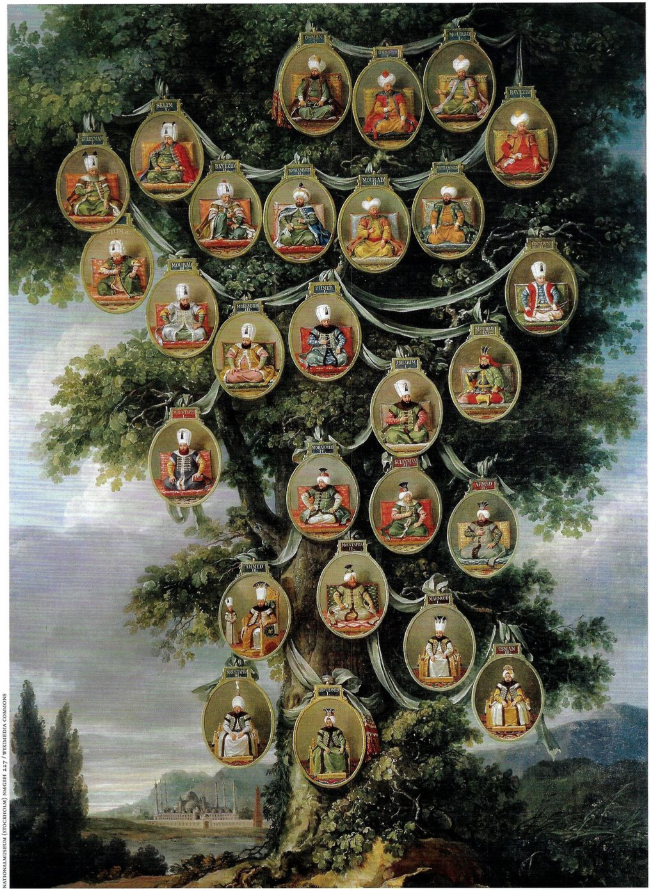
The plates commissioned by Mouradgea provide what Findley calls "uniquely valuable pictorial evidence" of Ottoman parades and ceremonies; officials and their costumes; Muslim women, veiled and unveiled; the different costumes of Albanians, Greeks, Bosnians; Greek dances; Dervish exercises; Muslim prayers, mosques and calendars; and the relics of the Prophet in Topkapı Palace. He also shows the grand vizier's tribunal at work in the *divanhane* in the Topkapı and scribes working in the Sublime Porte. Only an insider/outsider like Mouradgea could have commissioned such a collection and have them engraved in Paris. There are even intimate details of harem life – back in Istanbul, his family had financial relations with the Chief Black Eunuch, who was in charge of the Harem. One print shows the ritual of the Sultan having a bath, helped by numerous female attendants; another shows a European envoy lunching with the grand vizier in the imperial *divan*.

Mouradgea, in addition to his other careers, was also a political reformer. Posted as a Swedish diplomat to Istanbul in 1792–99, he wrote memoranda for the Sultan and helped found the Ottoman Academy of Military Engineering. However, Selim III requested Mouradgea's recall, as he believed he had become "completely inclined towards the French" and a Republican, and the French Republic had invaded the wealthy Ottoman province of Egypt. He lived off a small Swedish pension outside Paris with his second French wife, born Amélie Belliard de Vaubicourt, until his death in 1807. His son Constantine, a Swedish diplomat, arranged the publication of the third volume in 1820 (perhaps with help from Louis XVIII, to whom the artist Antoine Ignace Melling had just dedicated his superb *Voyage pittoresque de Constantinople* in 1819).

Findley has produced a fascinating, definitive study, important for the histories of diplomacy and book production as well as Ottoman studies, and a fitting sequel to his books *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History* (1989) and *The Turks in World History* (2005). The difficulties of finding first-hand information on such an elusive, multifarious and peripatetic man as Mouradgea are suggested by the amount of research Findley has conducted in archives in Istanbul, Venice, Paris, Nantes and Sweden. Long quotations from Mouradgea's text are accompanied by hundreds of reproductions of the prints in his book.

Mouradgea's life and books (there was also a history of the Ottoman dynasty) show that alliances, translation and tolerance were no less characteristic of Ottoman-European relations than conflict and ignorance. Hopefully, one day both the Qatari owners of the Celsing collection of pictures (now, shamefully, hidden from public view) and Mouradgea's Swedish descendants, who still own some of the pictures he commissioned, will allow them to be exhibited. No one who sees these pictures, or reads this book, could dispute that the Ottoman Empire, however different in government, language and faith, was artistically, commercially and above all diplomatically closely linked to Europe. Ottoman history is also European history. ◆

Philip Mansel's latest books are 'Aleppo: The Rise and Fall of Syria's Great Merchant City' (IB Tauris 2016, 2017) and 'King of the World: The Life of Louis XIV' (Allen Lane and University of Chicago Press 2019)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IBRAHIM I.
MOUSTAPHA I.
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AHMED III.
MAHMOUD I.
OSMAN III.
MOUSTAPHA III.
ABDULHAMID I.

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FROM STEPPE TO SNOW

CENTRAL ASIA: THE INSIDE STORY

To mark the publication of our book of photographs by Ergun Çağatay, *The Land of the Anka Bird: A journey through the Turkic heartlands*, we invited writers and photographers – all intrepid experts on Central Asia – to share their experiences of this massive, magnificent terrain.
In the first of a new series, CORNUCOPIA features the lives of its people, its wild flowers, and the fight to save the Gobi's elusive wild camel

THE FABRIC OF LIFE: ERGUN ÇAĞATAY'S EPIC JOURNEY

The prolific author Caroline Eden celebrates the work of the veteran photographer who covered 100,000 miles to capture the myriad colours of the Turkic world

PAGE 106

IN THE REALM OF THE ICE QUEEN

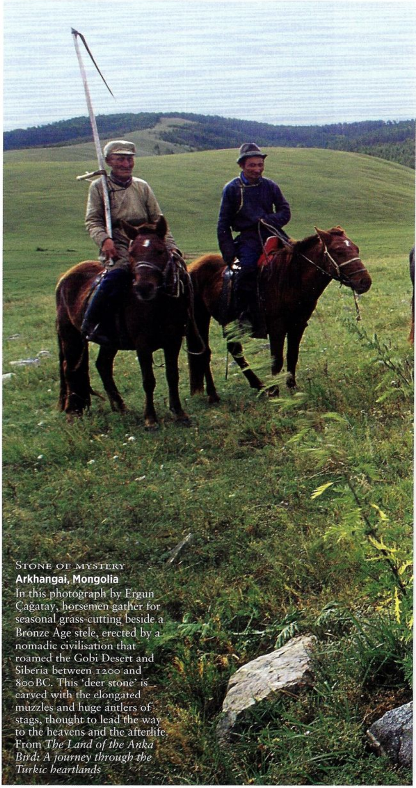
Chris Gardner traverses a plant-hunter's paradise in search of the flora of the Silk Road

PAGE 114

KING OF THE GOBI

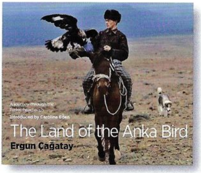
In extreme terrain, John Hare pursues the rare wild camel, a miraculous survivor

PAGE 128



STONE OF MYSTERY
Arkhangai, Mongolia
In this photograph by Ergun Çağatay, horsemen gather for seasonal grass-cutting beside a Bronze Age stele, erected by a nomadic civilisation that roamed the Gobi Desert and Siberia between 1200 and 800BC. This 'deer stone' is carved with the elongated muzzles and huge antlers of stags, thought to lead the way to the heavens and the afterlife. From *The Land of the Anka Bird: A journey through the Turkic heartlands*

TO DESERT SANDS



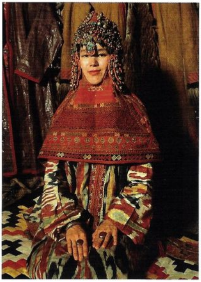
Introduced by Caroline Eden

The Land of the Anka Bird

Ergun Çağatay

THE FABRIC OF LIFE: ERGUN ÇAĞATAY'S EPIC JOURNEY

For 15 years, as the Cold War thawed, the photographer Ergun Çağatay criss-crossed the vast expanse of the Turkic-speaking world. Capturing people at work, at play and at prayer, he unravelled the threads of myth and culture that unite them across wildly varying lands. Caroline Eden tells Çağatay's remarkable story



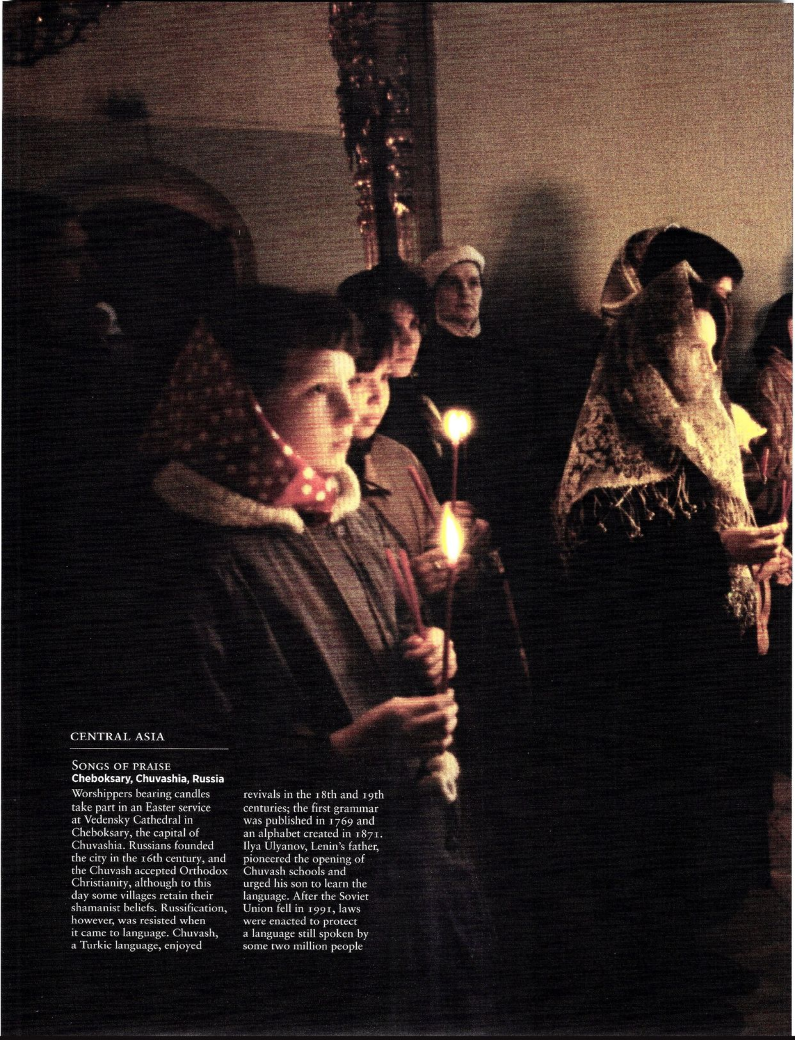
ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY ERGUN ÇAĞATAY

'The earth is hard, the heavens far'
Central Asian saying

FABRIC OF LIFE

Bukhara, Uzbekistan

A trader in Bukhara eats lunch surrounded by an array of colourful fabrics. Baghmal (silk-velvet ikat), the most luxurious fabric, arrived early in the 19th century and is still worn today. Rich, deep colours such as purple, orange and brown are ever popular



CENTRAL ASIA

SONGS OF PRAISE

Cheboksary, Chuvashia, Russia

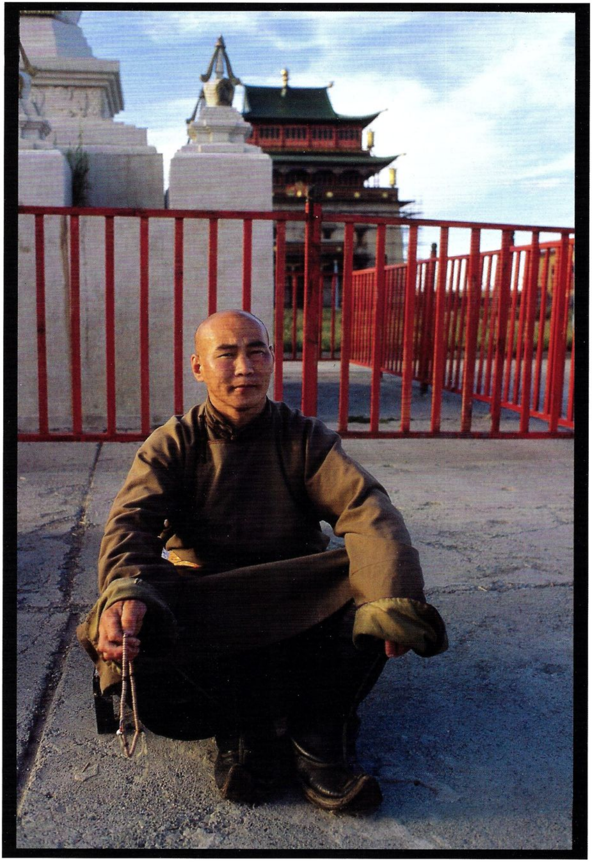
Worshippers bearing candles take part in an Easter service at Vedensky Cathedral in Cheboksary, the capital of Chuvashia. Russians founded the city in the 16th century, and the Chuvash accepted Orthodox Christianity, although to this day some villages retain their shamanist beliefs. Russification, however, was resisted when it came to language. Chuvash, a Turkic language, enjoyed revivals in the 18th and 19th centuries; the first grammar was published in 1769 and an alphabet created in 1871. Ilya Ulyanov, Lenin's father, pioneered the opening of Chuvash schools and urged his son to learn the language. After the Soviet Union fell in 1991, laws were enacted to protect a language still spoken by some two million people

CENTRAL ASIA

Pilgrims' progress

Kunya-Urgench,Turkmenistan

A woman prays with her children at the foot of the Kutluğ-Timur Minaret in Kunya-Urgench, where pilgrims walk round in an anticlockwise direction. The tallest minaret in Central Asia, this steeply tapering monument measures 12 metres in diameter at its base and just two at the top, soaring to a height of 62 metres. A lantern on top served to guide distant caravans at night. The original minaret dates from 1011, but was restored or possibly rebuilt by Kutluğ-Timur (1321–36), whose name it still bears



Like all great photographers, Ergun Çağatay had that rare skill of pressing the shutter at precisely the right moment. But for every image taken, years of work had gone before.

For more than a decade, the Izmir-born photographer criss-crossed the Turkic-speaking world. Setting out in the 1990s, after recovering from injuries sustained in a near-fatal bomb attack in Paris ten years earlier, Çağatay covered more than 100,000 miles travelling from Lithuania in the west to Yakutia in eastern Siberia. His aim in traversing this vast landmass was to capture the people and cultures that over centuries have risen from its steppes, snowy wastes and desert sands.

Each photograph is as clear-eyed as it is humane, and each illustrates Çağatay's extraordinary range and artistic power. By the end he had produced more than 40,000 images.

What Çağatay does so effectively is to remove our gaze from modern Turkey – and the much-surveyed historic world of the Ottoman Empire – and take us elsewhere. He shows us the connections that these diverse groups share despite living in wildly contrasting landscapes.

Above Ergun Çağatay (1937–2018) in Canada in 1982. A year later he was severely injured by a terrorist bomb in Paris Opposite A monk at the Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. The Mongolian capital evolved out of a yurt city founded by nomadic Buddhist monks in the 17th century

We travel from the deserts, oasis cities and mountains of Central Asia's Turkic-speaking republics (the "Stans") to the emerald steppe and the snow-whipped tundra of Mongolia and Russia, to remote villages and towns in Transcaucasia and Eastern Europe. In the wilderness we meet an eagle hunter riding out on horseback. And we witness the Yakuts, a Turkic people in northeast Siberia who expertly weather winter lows of -56°C. In urban settings we see Russian Chuvash singers rehearse in Vedensky Cathedral, Cheboksary, and we meet the Gagauz celebrating Easter at an Orthodox church in Moldova.

Journeys into the heart of Central Asia and the far fringes of the former USSR were seldom made in the years directly after the fall of the Soviet Union. But Çağatay never felt himself to be a stranger, instead discovering familiar words, culture and body language. Determined to remain self-sufficient and independent, he fitted water tanks to the roof of his red jeep and noted down useful foreign words and phrases – though often it was the familiar sound of his Turkish that opened doors and eased friendships.

Travel in more remote regions then, as now, was hard work. There were few amenities and fewer hotels, the weather was often extreme and the distances vast. "The earth is hard, the heavens far," as the Central Asian saying goes.

Unlike a piece of journalism, or a diary entry, photographs shot in faraway locations tend not to show their long and difficult backstory. As viewers we are protected from the waiting, the bureaucracy, the border checks, the sheer uncomfortableness of it all. With the surrounding noise airbrushed out, we are left with the beauty of one single moment suspended in time. But Çağatay was at his creative best in these lands, partly because, regardless of all the associations and kinship, he was an outsider, and this detachment – a sense of always looking on – made him the effective chronicler he was.

Each of Çağatay's pictures raises its own questions. In Uzbekistan, by Bukhara's bulbous trading domes, a wedding party strolls in front of the jewellers' and goldsmiths' bazaar, built in 1586–87 at the historic centre of the Silk Road. The group walks towards us – towards the wedding – laden with expectation, musical instruments and parcels. In the other direction, a gaggle of schoolchildren go by, weighed down by rucksacks. We wonder, then, about their school, the age of the children, what it must be like to study and learn amidst such architecture and history. And we wonder again about a wedding party – how the bride might dress, how old the groom is, what songs the musicians will play, what food will be served.

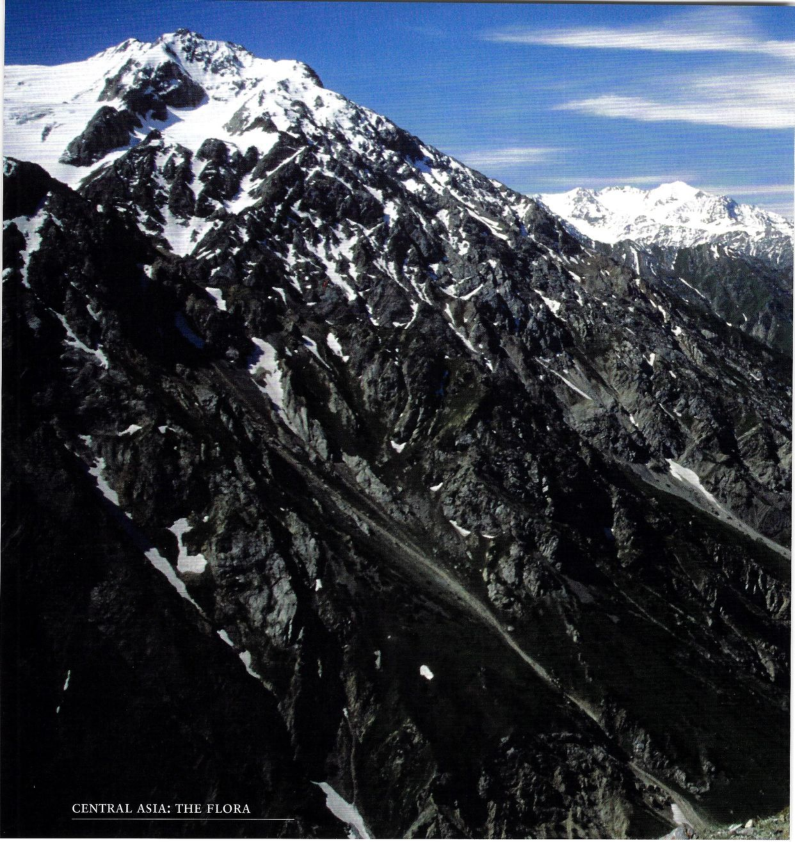
At the old Tolkuchka Bazaar, a desert market on the outskirts of Ashgabat, capital of closed-off Turkmenistan, we see an intimate trading scene dominated by women. Somehow Çağatay finds a way in, and in so doing carries us with him for this rarest of glimpses.

In Samarkand we see some of the city's most impressive buildings before their over-zealous restoration. This is especially so at the Shah-i-Zinda, an avenue of 14th- and 15th-century mausoleums where pilgrims visit the tombs of Timur's wives and of Kusam ibn-Abbas, a cousin of the Prophet. Çağatay captured it at its most atmospheric, when the lavishly tiled honeycomb half-domes, between shallow niches, were still not too shiny, not too perfect, as they are today.

Çağatay died in 2018, just as he was embarking on a project to photograph the Crimean Tatars, the peoples of the Balkans and the Uighurs of western China. His wife, Kari Çağatay, recalled to me over the phone from Istanbul – both of us confined to our homes during the Covid-19 lockdown – how she wished Ergun had recorded his adventures in words as well as pictures, especially as she did not travel there with him. "I was after him for years to write his fantastic stories, to record the people he met. I just couldn't make him write anything down." ◆

'The Land of the Anka Bird: A journey through the Turkic heartlands'. Photographs by Ergun Çağatay, with text by Caroline Eden, published by Cornucopia Books, £25, from cornucopia.net/ankabird

Caroline Eden's other books are 'Samarkand' (Kyle Books, 2016), 'Black Sea' (Quadrille, 2018) and 'Red Sands' (Quadrille, 2020). Twitter and Instagram: @edentravels



CENTRAL ASIA: THE FLORA

IN THE REALM OF THE ICE QUEEN

Central Asia, a plant-hunter's paradise, has long held Chris Gardner under its spell. For two decades the Antalya-based botanical writer and photographer has traversed countless miles of steppe and mountain in search of the hardier cousins of many of his favourite Turkish plants – from towering foxtail lilies to the tiny '*Trollius lilacinus*', exquisite ice queen of the Tien Shan

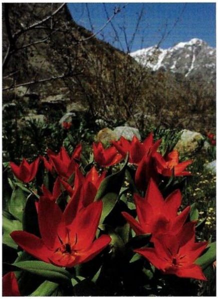
Saddle-sore was putting it mildly. I am definitely not a born rider. Thankfully, back in 1999, my 30-year-old body recovered swiftly, helped by a shot or three of finest walnut-flavoured vodka, as prescribed by my friend and fellow naturalist Vladimir Kolbinsev, a long-time researcher and wildlife guide in Kazakhstan. The next day we were off again, riding (or clinging on) as the horses powered up to a 3,000-metre pass in Kazakhstan's fabulous Aksu-Dzabagly Nature Reserve in the Tien Shan (Celestial Mountains).

Once at the pass, any aches quickly dispelled, the landscape and flora were all-consuming. Around us loomed snow-capped peaks. Below us foothills were riven

LITTLE AKSU VALLEY, KAZAKHSTAN THE LIMESTONE RAMPARTS OF THE SPLENDID AKSU-DZABAGLY NATURE RESERVE, HIGH IN THE TIEN SHAN. THE RESERVE PROTECTS A DIVERSE TRACT OF STEPPE AND MONTANE STEPPE HABITATS. THE ABSENCE OF GRAZING LIVESTOCK ALLOWS PLANTS TO THRIVE IN THE MEADOWS BELOW by canyons, while the steppe rolled out to the far, far horizon.

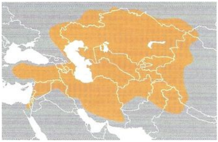
This was my introduction to Central Asia, a massive region that for so long had been shrouded in Soviet-era mystery and seemed impossible to reach. Only now was that beginning to change. The ex-Soviet states had their independence, and tourism was growing, fuelled by the lure of the fabled Silk Road, whose ancient hub was Central Asia. Of course, the notion of the Silk Road is an artificial one that we ourselves (or more correctly the German geographer Ferdinand von Richthofen, in 1877) have imposed on the landscape. Yet for botanists it is very real and very rich, a plant-hunter's paradise, a 5,000-mile route from central Turkey to China and Mongolia, passing through the southern band of Asian steppe, and blessed with the most spectacular flora on earth.

Broadly speaking, steppe can be defined as a semi-arid habitat that receives scant or erratic precipitation (mainly during winter and spring) of 25–50mm in a year, and endures both a cold winter and a hot, dry summer. It nurtures vegetation of a type found most widely in western and central Asia, but also in North America, Patagonia and parts of South Africa. In many instances, surprisingly perhaps, it ▷ *p119*



Tulipa praestans
ABOVE A blaze of red lights up the Anzob Valley, Tajikistan. Half the world's species of tulips – some 60 in all – are found in Central Asia. Hybrids are common and taxonomy can be difficult

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHRIS GARDNER



WIKICOMMONS

THE IRANO-TURANIAN REGION
ON THIS VAST EXPANSE OF STEPPE STRETCHING FROM TURKEY TO CHINA, SIMILAR PLANTS SHARE A SIMILAR CLIMATE OF LOW RAINFALL (25–50MM), COLD WINTERS AND HOT, DRY SUMMERS

Trollius lilacinus
ABOVE In June this ice queen – one of the finest flowers in Central Asia – floods areas of snowmelt in the windswept landscapes of Barskoon, on the southern shore of the Issyk-Kul lake in Kyrgyzstan. In a perfect combination of beauty and place this delicate ice-blue *Trollius*, here almost white, changes with the light

Eremurus albertii
OPPOSITE Central Asia is a feast of foxtail lilies in summer. Known as the 'desert candle', the rare *Eremurus albertii*, one of the region's 30 species, favours earthy slopes and banks. Here it is growing south of Shakhrisabz, in Uzbekistan. It can also be found in Kyrgyzstan

occurs in areas with rich soils, where only a lack of water prevents lusher vegetation.

In Asia, all steppe falls within what botanists term the Irano-Turanian floristic region. *Turan* is a Persian word, referring to the historical Land of Tur or Turkestan, the former name for the modern-day region of Central Asia. Much of the landscape is low-lying, semi-arid and seemingly endless, though broken up by the Pamir, Altai and Tien Shan mountain ranges, some parts of which receive enough moisture to support forests and meadows of tall flowers. Even so, such habitats are greatly influenced by the surrounding steppe, and many closely related plants are common to this immense bioregion.

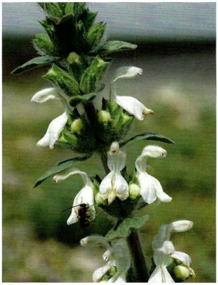
As my horse made its way uphill in Kazakhstan in 1999, I was struck by how many of the flowers here, such as *Linum*, *Hedysarum*, *Iris*, *Allium*, *Astragalus* and *Ferula*, I had recently seen near Konya in central Anatolia. With so many genera in common, the botanist writing of flowers in Central Asia could as well be describing their Turkish cousins. Still, there is a distinctly Central Asian flora, and, within various key genera, clines exist whose relative significance waxes or wanes.

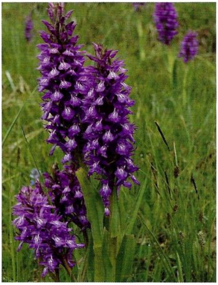
THE FLORAL MIX

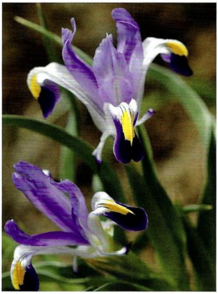
Two flowers that to me are synonymous with Central Asian botany are *Eremurus* and *Tulipa* – the foxtail lily and the tulip. Both also occur in Turkey (and Iran), but in ever-declining diversity. Central Asia is their heartland. It is home to about half of all foxtail lilies – at least 30 species. Turkey has just two: the very widespread *Eremurus spectabilis* and the localised *E cappadocicus*. Tulips are diverse and confusing in Central Asia, very much a genus in flux, which readily hybridises to add to the muddle. They receive a lot of attention from enthusiasts, and their taxonomy generates heated debate. It is perhaps best just to enjoy their beauty.

Other shared genera far more strongly represented in Central Asia than in Turkey include *Phlomoides*, *Dracocephalum* and *Rhodiola*. By contrast, genera such as *Verbascum*, *Onosma*, *Bellevalia*, *Fritillaria* and *Crocus* have decreased far more in Central Asia than in Turkey. It is the same for orchids. This cosmopolitan plant family is the largest of all, yet steppe is just too inhospitable for it. There are but a handful of these charismatic flowers in the whole region, confined to the better-watered upland and wetland habitats, including the marsh orchid *Dactylorhiza umbrosa* (top right), which can be found

▷ *p120*







Phlomoides kirghisorum
Above left The Kyrgyz *Phlomoides*, one of many species of Jerusalem sage, is similar to *Phlomoides laciniata*, a frequent sight in eastern Turkey and Iran. It belongs to the vibrant steppe community that also includes the scarlet *Papaver ocellatum*, the yellow flowers of the herb *Arnebia guttatum*, and the lavender mountain lily *Ixiolirion tartaricum*

Iris warleyensis
Centre A beautiful *Iris warleyensis* on the Taktakaraca Pass near Shakrisabz, Uzbekistan. Both this and the Bukhara iris are examples of *scorpiris* irises, which are particularly diverse in Central Asia. It is not unusual to find two or more species growing together – sometimes even hybridising

Papaver ocellatum
Left Vivid fields of the poppy *Papaver ocellatum* extend to the horizon in southern Kyrgyzstan

Dactylorhiza umbrosa
Above Stout spikes of marsh orchid festoon damp grassy places across the Tien Shan. It is one of the few orchids to grow there. In the steppe of Central Asia, orchids are confined to these moister habitats as well as damp Tien Shan spruce forests

Iris bucharica
Opposite The Bukhara iris is commonly cultivated in the West. Here it is seen in the wild in the Karatag Valley near Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan. Irises are unpalatable to livestock, and some species such as *Iris bucharica* end up dominating areas of heavy grazing. *Iris aucheri* does much the same in Turkey and *Iris fosteriana* in Iran

Young children in Kyrgyzstan are employed to patrol and guard the flowers, chastising any elders seen collecting them

from near Lake Van all the way across to the eastern Tien Shan.

I am often asked if I know of plants that have been carried along the Silk Road to colonise new terrain. I have noticed very few growing truly wild. Some species, such as *Salvia sclarea* and *Carduus nutans*, stretch from the western Mediterranean to western China. Maybe their distribution was enhanced by humans. Maybe they were always there. Without reference to fossil pollen records I cannot say.

What is certain is just how tough the steppe environment is, with wide variations from the hotter south to the cooler north. Then, too, there are the mountain areas that moderate summer temperatures, with streams and humid microclimates modifying the vegetation somewhat, while rocks and soils vary tremendously.

With all of this in mind, any plant that has adapted to its particular area is unlikely to yield to an invader, especially one of its cousins from a few hundred miles away. It is not that nothing ever could migrate (in North America problems exist, imported Asian tumbleweed being a classic example), but that this region has been criss-crossed by weather, animals and, latterly, people for such a lengthy period that any "invasion" has probably long since happened.

Some steppe genera are truly adaptable and resourceful – *Iris*, *Astragalus* and *Papaver*, for example, which are all found virtually everywhere along the Silk Road.

The dominant type of *Iris* is the *scorpiris* (also known as *juno*, of which there are 60 species in Eurasia, about half of these in Central Asia). Much loved by collectors, it is typically compact and showy, thriving in steppe, and graze-resistant, so that it grows in profusion even among browsing livestock.

In 2011 I recall arriving in Tajikistan at a very unsocial hour and enduring lengthy processing at the airport which allowed just two hours' sleep. Entering the Karatag Valley west of the capital, Dushanbe, I was so startled by my first sight of the primrose-yellow blooms of *Iris bucharica* (page 118) that I leapt from the car and scrambled up the bank to get at them. A quizzical look from my driver, Zafir, made sense when we rounded a few more bends to see thousands of them stretching along both sides of the valley. In total there must have been a million.

On the trail of the big ‘frit’

My return to Central Asia in 2009 after a ten-year absence had been prompted by a late decision to try to photograph the early-flowering bulbs in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan for my book *Flora of the Silk Road*. I had little idea what to expect in Tajikistan, a recently "opened" country (civil war had only just ended), but I can honestly say the people were delightful and very helpful to this plant-crazy foreigner. My charming interpreter-guide, Muqim Ergashboev, and I had a few adventures, sneaking over a rare fence for tulips and trying to reach awkward stands of the golden-orange *Fritillaria eduardii* (below).

I'd stayed overnight in a small village in the flower-rich Romit Valley, where my hosts had laid on an unbelievable spread and made me perfectly comfortable. I mentioned my quest and asked if they knew where I could find the "frit". They did. What they did not tell me (until we reached the location next morning) was that I must take a flimsy zipline across a fast-flowing river. But nothing ventured, nothing gained, and I zipped across to find a few plants just starting to flower. Muqim and I located some far better ones later that day on a steep slope-cum-cliff. We clambered up it and I was overjoyed finally to get good photographs of this tricky plant – tricky to reach, that is, for this is a common species.

Fritillaria eduardii Known locally as *aigul* (moon-flower), this golden-orange fritillary thrives in the protected Aigul-Tash Mountain Reserve in Kyrgyzstan, where young children police the slopes to prevent collecting. Sadly, in neighbouring Tajikistan, it is picked excessively and is common only on inaccessible cliffs

In Tajikistan (and neighbouring Uzbekistan) there is a fairly recent craze among young men for gathering spring bulb flowers (*Fritillaria*, *Tulipa* and *Iris*) to sell to passing motorists. I have encountered groups of boys walking down from woodland enclaves clutching armfuls of blooms, much to the dismay of the group of botanical tourists marching uphill to see them. At best, the bulbs will need another few years to regain the strength to flower. Sadly, most accessible populations around Dushanbe have been slowly dying out.

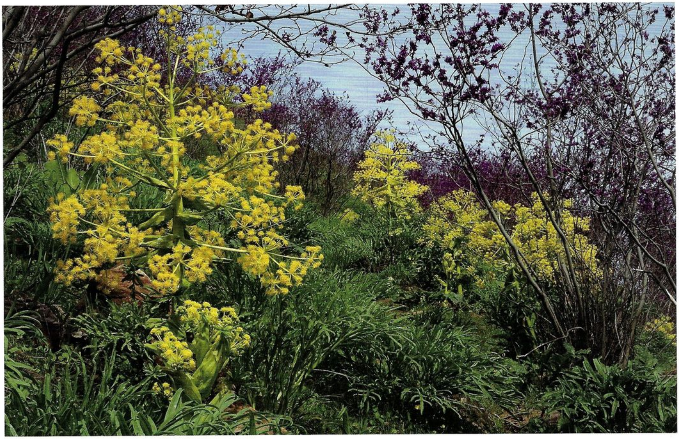
The story couldn't be more different in Kyrgyzstan. There, in the Aigul-Tash Mountain Reserve near Batken, they carefully preserve *Fritillaria eduardii*, or *aigul* (moon-flower), as it is known locally, no doubt because of the perfectly round, black-rimmed silver nectaries visible within. It is possible to see pristine stands of this magnificent plant. In fact, young children in Kyrgyzstan are employed to patrol and guard the flowers, chastising any elders seen collecting them. My appearance there drew the attention of two TV channels. I was interviewed for both, giving a thumbs-up to their conservation efforts. The very similar *Fritillaria imperialis* can be found in the mountains of both Iran and Turkey.

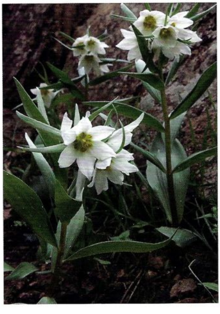
Junos and foxtails

From Tajikistan I crossed over into the more austere Uzbekistan. In 2009 there were many police and army checks, but tourists were off the menu (thanks to an edict by the long-time president, Islam Karimov), so I drove through unmolested to Shakhrisabz, birthplace of Timur (Tamerlane), finding the stunning *Tulipa micheliana* on the way.

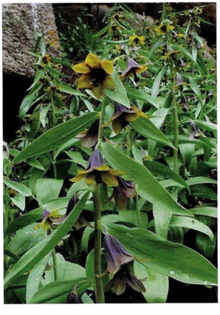
Between this city and the blue domes of Samarkand, where Timur was buried, is the Taktakaraca Pass, a superb location I had long wanted to visit. I had seen photographs of the area's stately *Iris magnifica* in *Bulbs* – the wonderful geophyte bible by Martyn Rix and Roger Phillips – and wanted to see them for myself. There were indeed plenty of the irises to be seen, as well as another species I sought, the exquisite *I warleyensis* (page 119).

This remarkable granite boulder landscape was populated with immense fennels (*Ferula kuhistanica*). In good years, the various species of these architectural brutes fill the big, wide spaces of Central Asia. To the east they pepper the grassy high steppe south of Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan; in Tajikistan they mingle with cerise Judas trees (*Cercis griffithii*); and in Uzbekistan, near Khiva, they appear in dramatic stands





Fritillaria bucharica
Fritillaries are found widely in Central Asia, although there are far fewer species than in Turkey and Iran. The delightfully delicate 'Bukhara fritillary' is a common sight on rocky slopes in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan



Fritillaria severzowii
The subdued green and bronzy colours of this regal fritillary, photographed below the Ala-Bel Pass in Kyrgyzstan in April, mean there is no danger from picking – few passers-by even notice it. It occurs on rocky slopes and scree, often in large numbers

Ferula tadshikorum and *Cercis griffithii*
ABOVE Yellow *Ferula tadshikorum*, a species of fennel, and Griffith's redbud tree, *Cercis griffithii*, seen near Nurek, Tajikistan. This colour combination of yellow and deep pink is also found near Antalya in Mediterranean Turkey, where *Ferula tingitana* mixes with the Judas tree, *Cercis siliquastrum*.

The great steppes of Central Asia abut the Mediterranean to the west. The two climates essentially differ only in average temperature, and many floral elements are understandably shared. Defining where one begins and the other ends is not always clear-cut

near ancient forts, along with delicate *Iris longiscapa*, as the Uzbek steppe finally yields to the Turkmen Desert.

No visitor can ignore the magnificent monuments of Uzbekistan, yet it is a rare soul who ventures the few kilometres beyond to enjoy the botanical treasure. The lower slopes of the Taktakaraca Pass explode into life again a month later, in June, when thousands of *Eremurus olgae* rise above the fast-drying steppe. These unpalatable plants often form spectacular stands in heavily grazed areas.

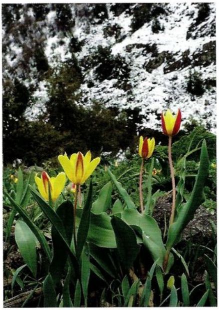
No foxtail lily is more impressive than *Eremurus robustus* (opposite), a true giant soaring to three metres. It is found in the Tien Shan, to the east of Tashkent, and in neighbouring areas of Kyrgyzstan. My first encounter with it had been in Kyrgyzstan, in the walnut forests of Arslanbob, where it grows somewhat incongruously in glades with stands of the handsome pink-flowered herb *Dictamnus albus* (also known as the burning bush, because of the aromatic oils that can supposedly ignite on still days). They look more at home on the open mountain steppe near Beldersay, a two-hour drive east of Tashkent, more or less where the Tien Shan begin their long march to China.

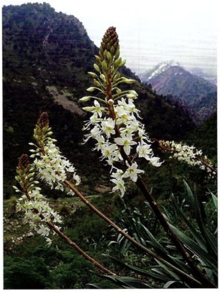
SPECIAL PLACES

The countryside around Beldersay is wonderful in spring, with myriad tulips and irises, *Crocus alatavicus*, soft pink *Fritillaria stenanthera* and regal *F severzowii* (page 121). There are also drifts of another outstanding foxtail lily, the milky-white *Eremurus lactiflorus* (right), often seen with *Tulipa tschimganica* (top), a dazzling natural hybrid that varies from bicoloured red and yellow to pure red.

As a newcomer I was grateful for the guidance of Vasily Eremin, a music teacher from Tashkent and a lover of mountain walking. We had a memorable three days, hiking in the foothills and finding more or less everything I had hoped to find. At the end he gave me his card – on it he was pictured posing before Chimgan Mountain between tall spires of *Eremurus robustus*. It made me determined to return in summer.

Indeed, since that spring I have returned to Central Asia once or twice a year, leading botanical tours across the Tien Shan from Uzbekistan to Kyrgyzstan, and negotiating convoluted Stalinist borders, now thankfully easier and visa-free. That said, fighting your way across the Uzbek–Kazakh border near Tashkent is always a trial. The main obstacles are huge boxes of cherries borne across by Uzbek ladies with sharp elbows.





Eremurus lactiflorus
ABOVE Drifts of this milky-white foxtail lily light up the Tien Shan east of Tashkent

Eremurus robustus
OPPOSITE Towering spires of this foxtail lily rise up from the rich meadows below the Greater Chimgan, Uzbekistan. This is the drier end of the Tien Shan range, home to many plants not found further east

Tulipa tschimganica
TOP Often mixed with *Eremurus robustus*, this red-and-yellow tulip is a natural hybrid of *Tulipa kaufmanniana* and *T dubia*. In this valley in the Bostanlyk region near Beldersay, 70 kilometres east of Tashkent, the hybrid and *T dubia* were growing side by side

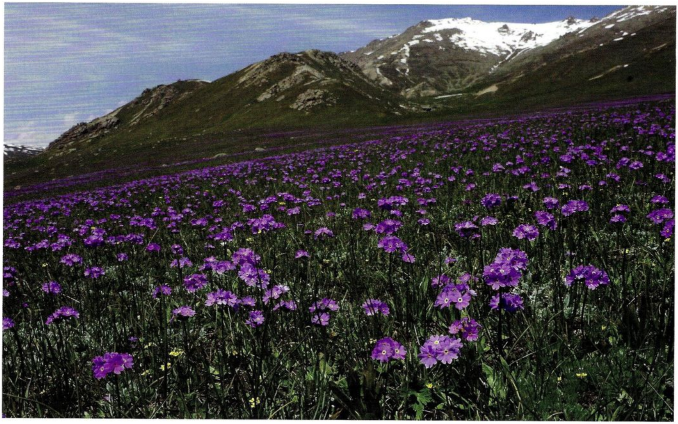
Once back in Kazakhstan, I always head for the Aksu–Dzabagly Nature Reserve, that remarkable slice of Central Asia (see pages 114–115). This place is special, not only in terms of its high diversity, but also because, remarkably, there has been no grazing here for nearly a century. The result is fabulous species-rich meadows, as well as thriving mammal populations. What I do not see here are thousands of *Eremurus* dominating the landscape; nor do I see thousands of *scorpiris* or similar stock-resistant plants. It is a time capsule of what the whole region would have looked like in the distant past, and an essential part of any itinerary.

Mind you, centuries of grazing have produced some incredible sights. The approach to the Ala-Bel Pass in Kyrgyzstan has rank upon rank of *Eremurus fuscus*, sweeping uphill in their hundreds of thousands. Around the pass, unimaginable numbers of *Primula algida* paint the high alpine turf lilac-pink against an impressive mountain backdrop (page 124). With its golden-eyed flowers, it is one of the few primulas to grow in Central Asia. Lovely though it may appear to us, it is unpalatable to livestock. Alongside these are legions of golden-orange *Trollius altaicus* (page 125), bronzy *Allium fedtschenkoana*, sheets of blue *Myosotis asiaticus* and the ivory spires of *Pedicularis dolicorrhiza*.

The journey across the broad Suusaymyr (Otter) plain from here traverses a major grazing area, with many herds of horses. These are milked daily, and locals sell yoghurt balls and that Kyrgyz passion, *kumis*, fermented mare's milk, from creaky, patched-up Russian caravans. An acquired taste, all visitors should try it – if only once.

Here and there, stands of cerise *Paeonia intermedia* spread across the slopes, and then there is a rollercoaster ride through dramatic, ever-changing landscapes to Kochkor. The steppe slopes just before we arrive are populated with a fascinating cushion flora that includes *Convolvulus tragacanthoides* (page 125) and *Acantholimon alatavicum* – remarkably similar to *Convolvulus compactus* and *Acantholimon ulicinum*, plants I can see above Antalya. This reminded me of a plant quest I undertook this year, to find *Rhaponticoides hierroi* near Antalya, and just how similar this plant looked to *R ruthenica* (page 124), which I had seen near Sary-Chelek, Kyrgyzstan. Comparisons can go on and on; the unity is clear to see.

Kochkor is not far from Naryn, where a day trip takes one to Tash Rabat, a 15th-century caravanserai stuck out in the

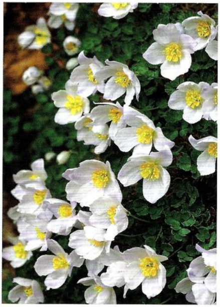


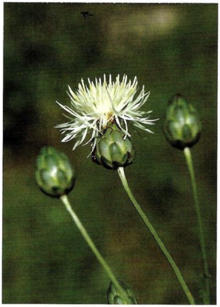
middle of nowhere. The limestone cliffs have one of Central Asia's loveliest alpines, *Paraquilegia caespitosa* (right), its delicate flowers quivering in the slightest breeze as lammergeiers and golden eagles wheel on thermals overhead. It is one of the best big-raptor sites I know.

THE ICE QUEEN

One of my favourite places to look for flowers in Kyrgyzstan is Barskoon. It is a wild, high plateau that lies on the ancient Silk Road route from the deep, saline lake of Issyk-Kul to Kashgar. Leaving the lake (the world's tenth-largest by volume, and said to be a former Soviet torpedo-testing site), you climb through ranks of narrow, dark-green Tien Shan spruce, following a dirt road (well maintained, thanks to a nearby gold mine) on up to high screes. Localised gems such as *Desideria flabellata* and the more common lurid pink *Primula nivalis* are found here, but it is the fabulous lakeland at the summit that, at 3,850 metres, literally takes the breath away. Even in mid-June the lakes are half-covered in ice.

This is the realm of the ice queen, the plant I seek more than any other in Central Asia. In favourable locations and just as the snows recede, the bare ground is speckled with thousands of ice-blue *Trollius lilacinus* (page 116), a plant of rare refinement, set in landscapes that encapsulate the wildness of the Celestial Mountains. A challenging plant

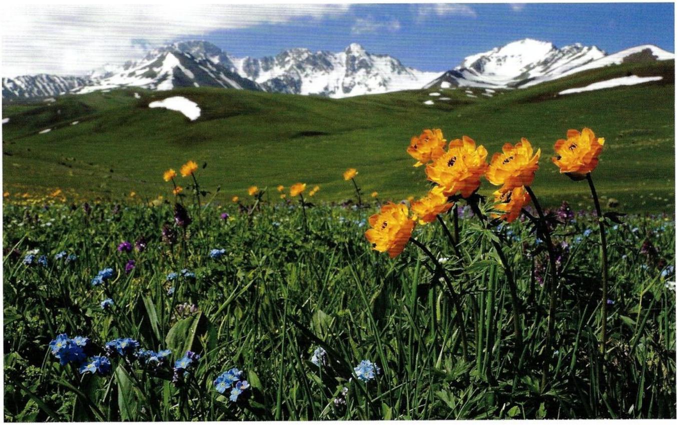


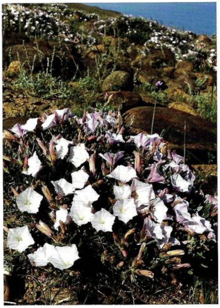


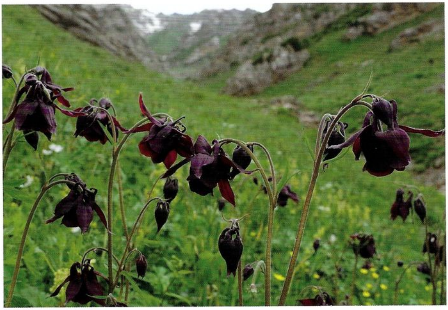
Primula algida
TOP An amazing sight, but unpalatable to livestock: millions of golden-eyed, pinkish-lilac primulas growing on the alpine turf of the Ala-Bel Pass in Kyrgyzstan

Paraquilegia caespitosa
ABOVE One of the area's loveliest alpines, seen here in Naryn, Kyrgyzstan, wedged into a cliff at Tash Rabat, an old Silk Road caravanserai

Rhaponticoides ruthenica
ABOVE This handsome cornflower grows in the Sary-Chelek Nature Reserve in Kyrgyzstan, established in 1959 and a UNESCO World Biosphere reserve since 1978. It closely resembles *Rhaponticoides hierroi*, found in the Taurus Mountains near Antalya in western Turkey



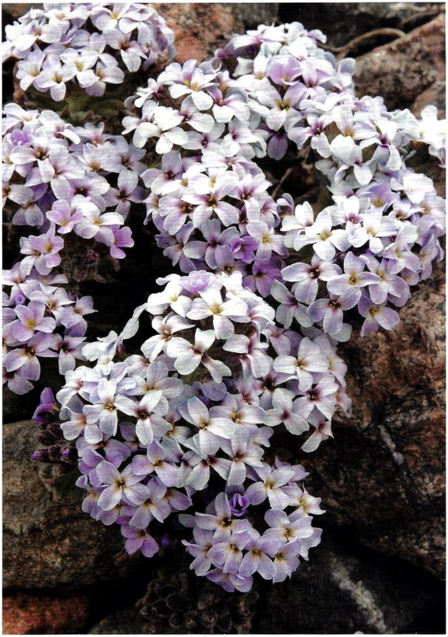




Convolvulus tragacanthoides
Above This tough steppe shrublet populates bare, rocky steppe slopes – another of the many examples of the botanical continuity of the Silk Road. Seen here near Kochkor in Kyrgyzstan, it bears a remarkable resemblance to *Convolvulus compactus*, found on the Turkish steppe

Trollius altaicus, Myosotis asiaticus
Top The golden-orange Altai globe flower, *Trollius altaicus*, shares a meadow with the blue Asian forget-me-not, *Myosotis asiaticus*, below the Ala-Bel Pass in Kyrgyzstan in April. Wondrous sheets of colour will swathe these high pastures in early summer

Aquilegia atrovinosa
Above In the species-rich meadows of Kazakhstan's Aksu-Dzabagly Nature Reserve, which has been protected and left ungrazed for almost a century, light filters through the petals of an elegant black-red aquilegia, a species widespread in the Tien Shan



to cultivate, it is best enjoyed in the wild.

The weather on Barskoon is fickle. Sunny mornings can quickly turn into blizzards, and setting off to explore always requires wearing everything one might possibly need. But it is this very wildness that makes it special. Other exciting valleys head south from the regional capital, Karakol, to locations including another favourite of mine: the 3,900-metre Chon Ashu Pass, where I seek out the refined botanical masterpiece *Corydalis fedtschenkoana* (opposite) and more *Trollius lilacinus* – the ice queen I could never have my fill of.

Karakol is also the burial place of Nikolay Mikhaylovich Przhevalsky (1839–88), who explored much of Central Asia and has a good number of plants (and animals) named after him. Pronouncing Central Asian plant names can be a tongue-twisting challenge thanks to the many Russian scientists who studied the natural history. Today low-rise, sleepy Karakol is a meeting place of cultures, home to many ethnic groups, including Dungans and Uyghurs from neighbouring China. A highlight of a visit is the chance to have dinner with them and to enjoy some delicious alternative cuisine.

From Karakol, flower-filled grassy steppe continues east to China, or one can detour north and enter Kazakhstan to experience the dramatic Charyn Canyon and the pastel-coloured rockscapes of Altyn Emel. Away from the mountains, the steppe becomes drier, reinforcing the notion of a Silk Road continuum, with the constant of Irano-Turanian flora all around. *Echinops nanus* clings to canyon lips much as *E pungens* might in eastern Turkey; roadsides are lined with *Salvia*, *Glaucium*, *Echium*, *Cousinia*, *Alcea* and *Onopordum* – all familiar friends.

Among the great joys of my travels are the wonderful, interesting and helpful people I meet. Another is the freedom to explore and to wander in search of plants. Even national parks have only a nominal gate-minder, and then one is free to walk and enjoy. Curious Kyrgyz riders might peer down at this camera-toting foreigner, bemused as to why he should travel so far to look at worthless plants which their horses cannot eat. But I am sure they revel in the endless outdoors and pure crystalline air as much as I do. ◆

Chris Gardner and his wife, Başak Gardner, organise and lead botanical tours worldwide, including Turkey and the lands of the Silk Road (viranatura.com). Their books, 'Flora of the Mediterranean' and 'Flora of the Silk Road', are available from cornucopia.net

The high screes of Aksu-Dzabagly, Kazakhstan. Regularly seen here are isabelline brown bears, feasting on the emerging crowns of wild rhubarb

Desideria flabellata
Above Charming but tough, this highly localised heavy-scree specialist thrives on the high plateau of Barskoon, Kyrgyzstan. Once crossed by the ancient Silk Road route leading from the lake of Issyk-Kul to Kashgar, this landscape is now a favourite hunting ground for botanists

Corydalis fedtschenkoana
Opposite This 'refined botanical masterpiece', one of the more outlandish members of the poppy family, is very particular about the scree it grows in. Absent from some areas but abundant in others, it is seen here on the high Chon Ashu Pass in Kyrgyzstan

KING OF THE GOBI

'CAMELUS FERUS', THE TWO-HUMPED WILD CAMEL, IS A BEAST OF ASTONISHING RESILIENCE. IT CAN SURVIVE ON WATER SALTIER THAN SEAWATER AND SHRUG OFF THE FALLOUT FROM NUCLEAR BOMBS. ONCE DISMISSED AS THE FERAL COUSIN OF THE DOMESTIC BACTRIAN CAMEL, SYMBOL OF THE SILK ROAD, THE ELUSIVE WILD CAMEL IS NOW KNOWN TO BE A DISTINCT SPECIES EVEN MORE ENDANGERED THAN THE GIANT PANDA. IT HAS FOUND A CHAMPION IN THE EXPLORER AND CONSERVATIONIST JOHN HARE, WHO TELLS THE STORY OF THE FIGHT TO SAVE THE 'KING OF THE GOBI' FROM EXTINCTION

A LARGE HERD OF WILD CAMELS ON THE MOVE THROUGH THEIR LAST REDOUBT, THE HOSTILE LOP NUR IN XINJIANG. FORMERLY CHINA'S NUCLEAR TEST SITE, LOP NUR IS NOW A NATURE RESERVE TWO-THIRDS THE SIZE OF FRANCE. IN THE BACKGROUND, THE ALTYN TAGH (GOLD MOUNTAINS) FORM THE BORDER WITH TIBET. THE WILD CAMEL MIGRATES OVER AN AGE-OLD ROUTE FROM ONE SALTWATER POINT TO ANOTHER UP TO 150 MILES AWAY **OPPOSITE, LEFT** A WILD BULL CAMEL IN THE ALTYN TAGH. AFTER THE WINTER MATING SEASON A BULL LEAVES ITS HAREM AND SPENDS MOST OF ITS TIME ALONE **RIGHT** JOHN HARE EMERGES FROM HIS SNOW-COVERED TENT AFTER A BITTER NIGHT IN LOP NUR. IN 1994 HE WAS THE FIRST OUTSIDER IN 45 YEARS TO ENTER THE TERRITORY, NOW DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE WILD CAMEL

YUAN LEI

The sceptics held little belief in the concept of a separate species of wild double-humped camel. "Silk Road runaways" or "domestic Bactrian camels gone feral" were the prevailing views. Comparisons were made with the half-million feral dromedaries in Australia that had been released or escaped into Australian deserts and thrived.

Although some had open minds, many heads were shaken when, in 1993, I undertook an expedition into Mongolia's Great Gobi Strictly Protected Area "A" (GGSPA "A") to research what I later learnt was the wild camel, a creature very different from the domestic Bactrian. I went with a team of Russian scientists who, in the prevailing chaos of the Soviet Union's demise, were short of funds. I had managed to get together the $2,000 they required to secure myself a place in the team, but not before I had resolved a tussle with the late Professor Sokolov, who was concerned at my lack of any scientific qualification. He was persuaded I could be their wild Bactrian camel expert when he learnt that many years earlier I had worked with camels in Northern Nigeria.

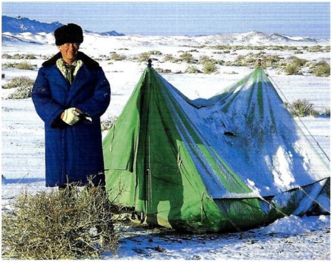
After this successful expedition I came to the conclusion that the wild Bactrian camel might be a different species. I based my new belief on one important fact. The Mongolian language has a separate name for the wild double-humped camel – *havtagai*. And *havtagai* means "flat head".

For many years I have been an admirer of the Swedish explorer Sven Hedin, who during the early years of the last century filled in many blank spaces on the map in today's Chinese province of Xinjiang. Having read many of his books, I was later to criss-cross his tracks in Lop Nur – that waterless, barren and hostile wilderness which is today almost the last redoubt of the wild camel in China, and which since 1955 has been used by China to test atmospheric and underground nuclear weapons.

In 1907, Hedin shot two wild camels in Lop Nur, returned with their skulls to Sweden, and in a Swedish scientific publication meticulously illustrated their skulls, giving precise dimensions. The Mongolians were right. Unlike the domestic Bactrian camel's skull, which is convex, the wild camel's skull is flat.

It was not until 2008 that the concept of a wild Bactrian camel was finally laid to rest. Over a period of five years, the University of Veterinary Medicine in Vienna, under the inspired leadership of Dr Pamela Burger, undertook genetic tests on wild camel samples sent in from habitats in both China and Mongolia. Blood, hair and bone DNA

JOHN HARE



YUAN LEI

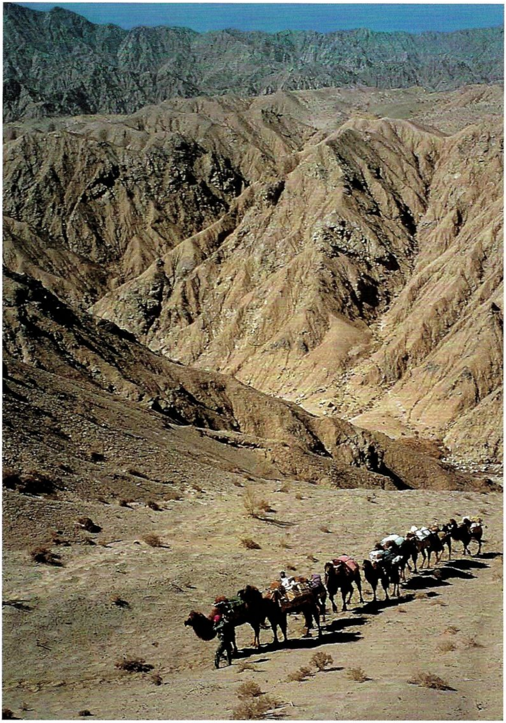
were scrupulously tested. The results vindicated both the Mongolians and Sven Hedin. The wild camel was pronounced to be a new and separate species of camel, which separated from any other known form of camel over 700,000 years ago. No longer was it to be called *Camelus bactrianus ferus* – but simply *Camelus ferus*, as confirmed by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), which organises and approves the Red List of threatened species. It is as different from the domestic Bactrian camel as we are from the chimpanzee.

The intense cold of the Central Asian ice age triggered the evolutionary development of two fat-filled humps as an emergency food supply.

Indeed, it could be the ancestor of all camels. It is a little-known fact that the wild camel's ancestor, a foot-high camelid, originated in the Arizona desert. There is a wonderful display of these humpless camelids in the Natural History Museum in New York. Over the millennia some of these Arizona camelids made their way south (appearing on the eight-mile-long prehistoric mural just discovered in the Amazon rainforest in Colombia), and the evolutionary results are the llama, alpaca, vicuña and guanaco, which live there to this day. Others headed north – a giant camel has recently been found embedded deep in Arctic ice in Canada – but most crossed the Bering Strait and then headed south.

Once the more clement Middle East was reached, two humps were no longer required and mutated into one – the single-humped dromedary had evolved from the double-humped camel. Indeed, if you look at the week-old embryo of a dromedary you will see the remnant of a second hump.

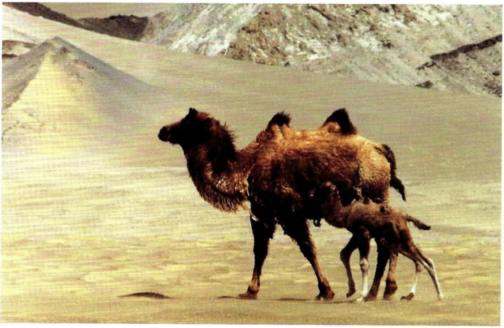
Where does the extant wild



JOHN HARE

Above Searching for wild camels in the Altyn Tagh range in 1997 with a party of Chinese scientists. John Hare undertakes all his wild camel expeditions in the Gobi with domestic Bactrian camels. The noise of vehicles can be heard by the timid wild camels up to two miles away and they will run off. When they see Bactrian camels, their curiosity gets the better of them, and they will sometimes come very close to a travelling caravan

JOHN HARE



JOHN HARE

TOP HUGE SAND DUNES IN LOP NUR HAVE FORMED UP AGAINST THE ALTYN TAGH. HARE MADE AN ARDUOUS FIVE-DAY TREK OVER THE DUNES IN SEARCH OF WILD CAMELS. HERE HIS BACTRIAN CAMELS ARE COMING DOWN OFF THE DUNES INTO A VALLEY WHICH HAS VEGETATION FOR THE WILD CAMELS – BUT NO FRESH WATER

ABOVE A WILD FEMALE CAMEL WITH A CALF LESS THAN 12 HOURS OLD. SHOT IN LOP NUR IN 1995, THIS IS THE ONLY PHOTOGRAPH EVER TAKEN IN THE WILD OF SUCH A NEWLY BORN CALF. IT PROVIDED THE INSPIRATION FOR THE WILD CAMEL PROTECTION FOUNDATION'S LOGO

camel in Lop Nur and Mongolia fit into this evolutionary cycle? No one knows for certain but, given that it separated from any known form of camel over 700,000 years ago, it could be the ancestor of all camels – both the one-humped and the two.

In 1994, a year after the Mongolian expedition, I was invited to give a paper at a biodiversity conference in Ulaanbaatar on the state of the wild Bactrian camel (as it was then called) in Mongolia. I noted in the audience, seated to my left, a group of smartly dressed Chinese scientists. I had learnt that there were approximately 600 wild camels in Lop Nur, an area that had been strictly off limits to foreigners for 45 years because of the nuclear testing. Feeling I had little to lose, I appealed to the expressionless faces of the Chinese to allow me to enter Lop Nur to research the wild camel. No one moved or gave any visible indication that I had made such an outlandish request.

That night there was a knock on my hotel door and a slightly owlish, bespectacled Chinese professor called Yuan Guoying, who has since become a good friend, confronted me. "I think

I can get you into Lop Nur, but Beijing must not know," he said. "My brother is a general in the Chinese army and has jurisdiction over the area."

As a result, in 1995 I became the first foreigner to enter Lop Nur for 45 years. I made subsequent expeditions for wild camel research, riding domestic Bactrians into the toughest desert in the world, in 1996, 1997 and 1999. These culminated in 2003 in the establishment of the Lop Nur Wild Camel National Nature Reserve – two-thirds the size of France and, at 155,000 square kilometres, one of the largest nature reserves in the world.

Using a compelling "swords into ploughshares" image, I managed to acquire substantial funding for the project from the Global Environment Facility – an offshoot of the World Bank. At that point Beijing discovered what I had been secretly allowed to do by the wily professor and his military brother. But money talks, especially World Bank money, and as the professor and his brother had by then retired, no careers were ruined, and the reserve has been established as a National Reserve on a par with the Chinese panda reserve.

In 1997 Kathryn Rae, an environmental lawyer who had helped obtain the World Bank funding, and I established a UK charity, the Wild Camel Protection Foundation (WCPF), and we have worked together as trustees of the charity over the past 23 years. Much has been achieved, and not just a vast reserve in China. In Mongolia, in the GGSPA "A" buffer zone, a captive wild camel breeding centre has been set up at a spring called Zakhyn Us. Starting with eight wild camels in 2004, the centre now holds 35 and has reached its holding capacity. In addition, eight captive-bred wild camels have been released into the GGSPA "A", where the last remnant population of approximately 450 wild camels survives in Mongolia. This breeding centre is the only place in the world where a captive wild camel population is held. An extension is shortly to be opened at Toli Bulag, 350 miles away.

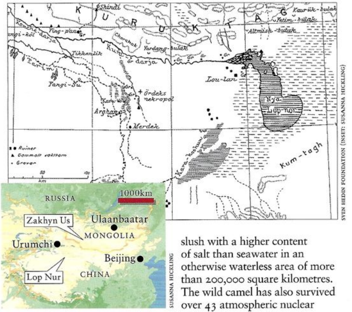
The wild camel is the ultimate survivor. It is man that has forced the Chinese wild camels into the very heart of the Gashun Gobi (the Bitter Desert) and Lop Nur. Here it survives on saltwater slush with a higher content of salt than seawater in an otherwise waterless area of more than 200,000 square kilometres. The wild camel has also survived over 43 atmospheric nuclear tests, some more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Unlike in the human population surrounding Lop Nur, we saw no sign of horrific radiation-induced mutations in the wild camel herds.

Until the 1920s the Chinese and Mongolian wild camel herds intermingled. But in 1922 a road and a railway were constructed from Urumchi, the capital of Xinjiang, to Beijing. The two herds were separated, and subsequent development has ensured they can never be reunited. With approximately 600 in China and 450 in Mongolia, this new species of camel is classed as critically endangered – the final stage before extinction.

Many scientists consider the ability of the wild camel to drink saltwater no other mammal would touch, and their survival in the face of nuclear annihilation, to warrant intensive scientific study. Indeed the wild camel might hold secrets that could be of immense value to man as he blunders into an uncertain future.

In January 2019, the BBC went to both the wild camel breeding centre and into Gobi "A" in Mongolia to film the mating habits of the wild camel. This display takes place during the very coldest months of the year, and in temperatures of -35 degrees Celsius they obtained footage good enough to be featured in their

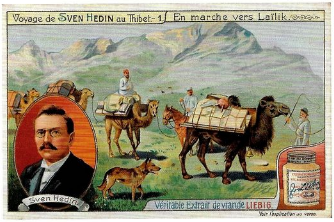
RIGHT LOP NUR DRAWN IN 1933 BY FOLKE BERGMAN, WHO WAS ON THE FAMOUS SWEDISH EXPLORER SVEN HEDIN'S LAST EXPEDITION BELOW A PRE-MATING DISPLAY BY A WILD BULL AT THE WILD CAMEL PROTECTION FOUNDATION'S BREEDING CENTRE AT ZAKHYN US, MONGOLIA. WILD CAMELS MATE AT THE COLDEST TIME OF YEAR AND ARE SELDOM ENTHUSED UNLESS IT IS WELL BELOW -30°C. BACTRIANS ALSO LIKE THE COLD: RELUCTANT BULLS HAVE ICED WATER TIPPED OVER THEIR REAR QUARTERS TO ENCOURAGE THEM BOTTOM SVEN HEDIN APPEARS IN A 1908 COLLECTABLE CARD FOR LIEBIG'S REAL MEAT EXTRACT



SUSANNA HICKLING

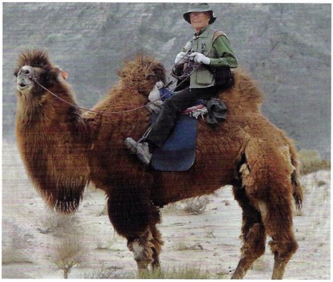
SVEN HEDIN FOUNDATION (INSET: SUSANNA HICKLING)

JOHN HARE

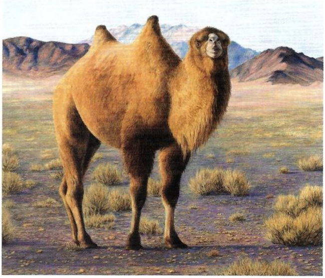

Voyage de SVEN HEDIN au Thibet- 1 En marche vers Laïlik
Sven Hedin
Véritable Extrait de viande LIEBIG
Voir l'explication au verso.

JOHN HARE

Left One- and two-year-old wild camel calves at the Zakhyn Us breeding centre. In captivity more males are born each year than females – a problem when they become sexually active and challenge the centre's dominant wild bull Below left Hare riding his favourite Bactrian camel. When he dropped his whip in an extremely remote spot, this camel immediately sat down and allowed him to get off his back and retrieve it – incredible behaviour Below 'The King of the Gobi', portrait of a wild bull camel in Polychromos colour pencil by the wildlife artist Charlotte Williams

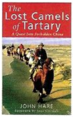


YUAN LEI



new four-part series, *A Perfect Planet,* narrated by Sir David Attenborough. Of great interest to me was the revelation that their mating instincts were strong enough for them to ignore the large and noisy drone hovering above them as it filmed.

The King of the Gobi needs universal support, and the Wild Camel Protection Foundation, the only organisation in the world with the sole aim of protecting the incredible wild camel, is doing its utmost to ensure it is never allowed to become extinct. ◆



John Hare *is an explorer, conservationist and author. He describes his early expeditions into Lop Nur in 'The Lost Camels of Tartary: A Quest into Forbidden China', with a foreword by Jane Goodall (Little, Brown, £10.99). Order from cornucopia.net/wildcamels. All proceeds go to the Wild Camel Protection Foundation (wildcamels.com)*

'THE KING OF THE GOBI'
URGENT WILD CAMEL APPEAL

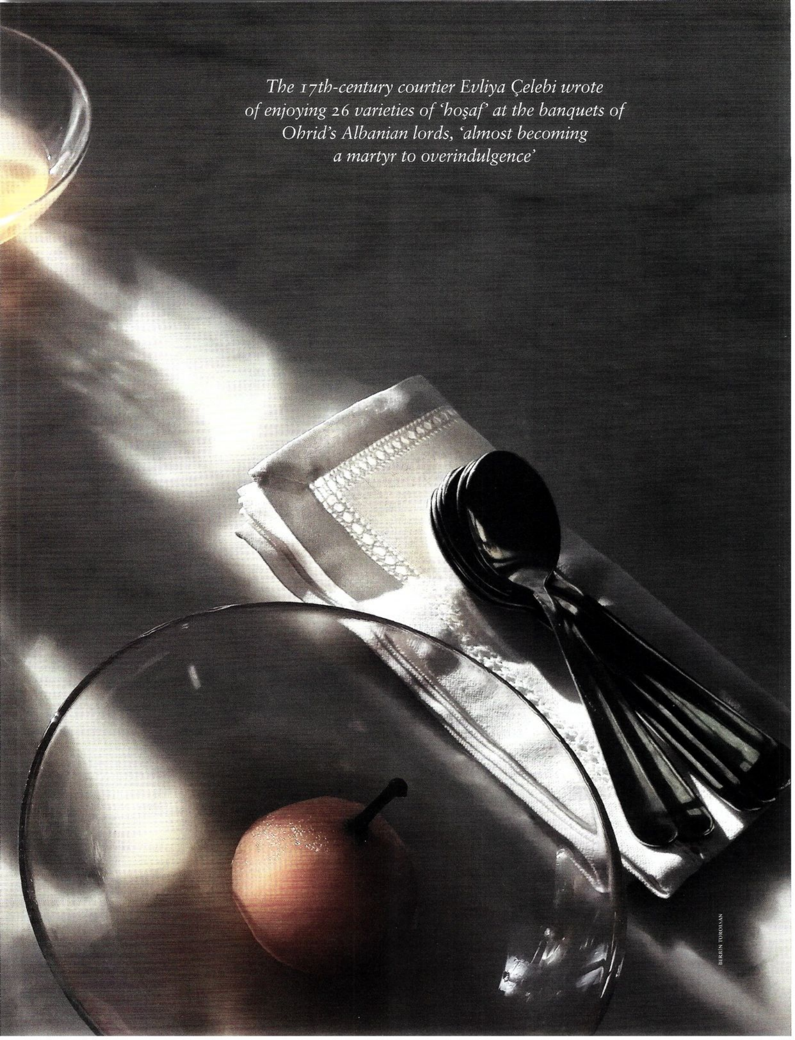
The Wild Camel Protection Foundation is extending its programme in Mongolia with a second breeding centre, supported by local government and Prague Zoo. To raise funds for the new centre and for educational projects, it is selling 100 limited-edition prints of the portrait of a wild bull camel above, signed by the artist, Charlotte Williams (44 x 54cm plus border, £200 + p&p from wildcamels.com)

COOKERY

SWEET ENDINGS

FRUIT POACHED TO PERFECTION, THE FRAGRANT 'HOŞAF', OR COMPOTE, IS A SIMPLE, SOOTHING FINALE TO ANY MEAL – BE IT BANQUET OR FAMILY DINNER. BERRİN TOROLSAN TRACES ITS ORIGINS TO THE SULTAN'S KITCHENS AND SERVES UP SOME IRRESISTIBLE RECIPES AND PHOTOGRAPHS

PEAR COMPOTE: PALACE LADIES LOVED TO DIP BREAD INTO THE DELICIOUS SYRUP



The 17th-century courtier Evliya Çelebi wrote of enjoying 26 varieties of 'hoşaf' at the banquets of Ohrid's Albanian lords, 'almost becoming a martyr to overindulgence'

BERRİN TOROSAN

The book-loving Emir of Bitlis, Abdhal Khan, laid on a sumptuous feast for Evliya and his uncle, which ended with no fewer than fifty hoşafs served in crystal bowls

On the evening of May 20, 1836, Sultan Mahmud II hosted a banquet in the famous meadow of the Sweet Waters of Asia, by the Bosphorus, to mark the circumcision of two of his sons, the half-brothers and crown princes Abdülmecid and Abdülaziz, each of whom would, in his turn, ascend the throne. Every bit the reformer and Westerniser, the Sultan who had abolished the Janissaries nonetheless felt that a feast should be served in the traditional manner. So the diplomatic corps, in their stiff uniforms, were probably seated somewhat uncomfortably round huge trays set on low tables.

Among the guests that night was a young captain, Helmuth von Moltke, who had been granted leave from the Prussian army to explore the Ottoman Empire, and who would later be asked by the Sultan to help to train his new army. In a letter home he described the great occasion.

Delicacy followed delicacy, wrote the future field marshal. Unaware that they should be pacing themselves and just tasting each course, the European guests helped themselves to copious quantities from the dishes set before them, until one of them had to "insist on *Pilaw*", knowing that only this would signal the end of the meal. When the rice dish arrived, it was quickly followed by a thirst-quenching "bowl of *Wuschaff*, an infusion of fruit, placed in the centre, which we ate with spoons and emptied".

The sequence of courses described by Moltke confirmed an earlier account by Mouradgea d'Ohsson. A polyglot Ottoman subject born in Pera in 1740, Mouradgea was known as Muratcan Tosunyan until he Frenchified his name. His insider's view of the Ottoman state, *Tableau général de l'Empire othoman*, is an incomparable source of information on Ottoman etiquette (see "Behind Palace Doors", page 80).

No sooner was *pilav* placed before guests at the end of a meal, Mouradgea wrote, than "*Khosch'ab*" – Moltke's *Wuschaff* – was served, to be eaten with the rice. (The word, from the Persian meaning "delightful water", became "*hoşaf*" in everyday Turkish.) The dish consisted of "all kinds of fruit, raisins, pears, apples, apricots, cherries, even pistachios poached in sugar and water". Well-to-do households might add "a sprinkling of rosewater or orange-blossom water, or a touch of musk". In summer it was "chilled with cubes of ice".

Hoşaf is the Western world's compote, and is still enjoyed as a way to end a meal on a *hoş* (delightful) sweet note. If it no longer appears on menus, that is because it is now known by the European-sounding word *komposto*.

Eating *hoşaf* was a ritual demanding a special spoon. The poet and composer Leyla Saz (1850–1936), daughter of the Sultan's physician, described in her memoirs how at palace meals each place was set with two spoons: one for *pilav*, the other for *hoşaf*.

Today these spoons are considered works of art and museum pieces. Differing in shape from the shallow, oval *pilav* spoon, a *hoşaf* spoon has a carved, semi-spherical bowl of mother-of-pearl, horn or tortoiseshell – the shell of the sea turtle was especially prized, as it turned transparent when polished. Slender ivory handles are set with gems and, to ensure good fortune, topped with a turquoise or coral finial. There is still a Spoonmaker's Han in Istanbul's Grand Bazaar, where these exquisite spoons were once sold in some 300 shops.

So essential a part of the meal was *hoşaf* that it was a frequent topic in memoirs and letters. In 1555 the Holy Roman Emperor's ambassador to the Porte, Ogier Ghiselin de Busbecq, who often briefed his masters on Turkish fare, wrote about the food on offer at caravanserais:

"The Turks, when they are travelling, do not require hot food or meat. Their relishes are sour milk and cheese, and prunes, pears, peaches, quinces, figs, raisins and cornel [cornelian] cherries boiled in clean water."

He did not mention *hoşaf* by name, or explain that the fruit is poached with honey or sugar, but that is what Busbecq refers to in saying: "Each man buys what takes his fancy, and eats the fruit as a relish with his bread, and when he has finished swallows the remaining juice by way of drink."

The 17th-century courtier and traveller Evliya Çelebi had a weakness for *hoşaf*, and especially for the version made with tart, ruby-coloured *vişne* (sour cherries). In his ten-volume *Seyahatname* (*Book of Travels*), Evliya listed all the *hoşafs* he tasted. In 1668, in what is now northern Macedonia, he found Ohrid's *hoşafs* particularly memorable, perhaps owing to their exquisite fruit: he wrote of enjoying 26 varieties of *hoşaf* at the banquets of Ohrid's Albanian lords, "almost becoming a martyr to overindulgence".

When Evliya visited his uncle Melek Ahmed Pasha, *vali* (governor) of the eastern Anatolian province of Van, the book-loving Emir of Bitlis, Abdhal Khan, laid on a sumptuous feast for the two of them, which ended with no fewer than 50 *hoşafs*, served in crystal bowls, with precious spoons set with gems. No other dish is mentioned.

Auction houses often mistakenly call *hoşaf* spoons "sherbet" spoons, as do early travellers' accounts, but sherbet is drunk from a glass, while *hoşaf* contains whole fruit which needs to be eaten with a spoon. In his list of the different trades, Evliya clearly distinguished between makers of *hoşaf* and makers of sherbet. Istanbul had 300 sherbet shops and 500 *hoşaf* shops, decorated with "colourful paintings", presumably of fruit and flowers. Served in bowls of china or celadon, fragrant *hoşafs* could be made of apricots and prunes from Bukhara, plums from Mardin, pears from Azerbaijan, raisins from Izmir, apples from Kocaeli (İzmit), sour cherries from Tekirdağ in Thrace, or cornelian cherries from the gardens of Çubuklu on the Bosphorus. Customers were lured with a rhyme:

Rahat-ı candır,
bedene kandır,
beni âdemi kandırır,
canım hoşâb.

Calm to the soul,
Blood to the body,
Relish to the son of Adam,
My adorable *hoşâb*.

Istanbul seems to have enjoyed an endless supply of dried fruits from distant lands, much of it consumed as *hoşaf*. Fresh fruit came from nearby orchards, many of them in the imperial gardens along the Bosphorus. Since every meal ended with *hoşaf*, the palace must have required vast quantities of fruit. In the Topkapı's huge kitchens the *hoşafçıbaşı* (head *hoşaf*-maker) supervised a regiment of cooks drilled to prepare *hoşafs*. Sherbet-making was a totally separate operation, with its own cooks.

A colourful contemporary of Evliya Çelebi's, Ali Ufkî Bey (1610–75) was a Pole, born Wojciech Bobowski, who was taken captive by Tatars and sold to the palace, where he rose from being a page to become chief musician and to serve three sultans. A prodigy with a knowledge of 16 languages, he was the first person to annotate Turkish music and wrote an account of life in the Topkapı, *Serai Enderum* ("Palace School"), which was translated from Italian into German in his lifetime and published in

Black Sea beauty: a prune compote made with ‘Üryani Erik’, or the ‘naked plum’, whose delicate skin is removed before drying

> *While Sherbet is 'drunk at all hours… khoshâb forms the termination of all orthodox meals'*
> *– Charles White, 'Three Years in Constantinople'*

Vienna in 1667. He noted that the Sultan would end a light meal with a choice of helva, rice pudding or the creamy pudding *muhallebi*, followed by "*Hosohab*" – "sweet water made from raisins or dried peaches, [dried] sour cherries etc".

Almost two centuries later, *hoşaf* was still an essential part of Ottoman cuisine when another foreigner who became immersed in Istanbul life described customs in minute detail. "The art of concocting khoshâb is considered difficult," wrote Charles White, a future correspondent for *The Daily Telegraph*. He managed to obtain a well-guarded recipe from the Topkapı kitchens, which he included in his book *Three Years in Constantinople: Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1844*. "The young black aghas and pages of the imperial palace are said to be adepts in this and other culinary practices. A proficient in the art of making khoshâb, who had been educated among the imperial pages, gave me a receipt."

> *Take refined sugar, pour upon it a sufficient quantity of rosewater, boil it, cast off the scum, and let it repose. When cool, add plain spring water, and place in it the required preserved fruit. Boil slowly, throw off impurities, strain the liquid through a fine sieve, pour it into a china bowl, add the fruit that has remained in the sieve, cool or ice it, and drink with sandal wood, aloes, or pear-wood spoons. A drop of musk may be added, to give a high flavour.*

White captured the mystique of *hoşaf* in his evocative account of Hadji Mustafa's, a famous restaurant on "Divan Yolly", near the Grand Bazaar: "At one end [of the 'shop'] is the owner's throne. There he rules over the vases of syrup and preserved fruits intended for concocting sherbet and khoshâb… One of the dainties on the happy mixture of which Mustafa prides himself is khoshâb. This beverage, though nearly related to, must not be confounded with, sherbet. The latter is… drunk at all hours. But khoshâb (agreeable water) forms the termination of all orthodox dinners."

White's palace recipe is somewhat daunting, but the dish was not only enjoyed in imperial circles. A wholesome, easy-to-prepare, inexpensive *hoşaf* was also found in dervish lodges, *imarets* (soup kitchens) and hospices, as well as in homes across the land.

In 1844, the year White was confiding his palace recipe, Mehmet Kâmil, a professor at the Imperial Medical School in Istanbul, published a popular cookery book called *Melceü't-Tabbâhîn* (*The Refuge of Chefs*). It was printed lithographically with the aim of mass production, thereby rescuing the middle classes from the need for chefs. Among Mehmet Kâmil's numerous traditional recipes are 14 kinds of *hoşaf*, made with fresh and dried fruit. The book was later translated into English by Turabi Efendi, chargé d'affaires to the viceroy of Egypt. Every guest was a given a copy of *A Manual of Turkish Cookery* at a banquet on the Thames at Woolwich on July 16, 1862. Under the heading "Khòsabs – Thin syrups with fruit in them", were nine of Mehmet Kâmil's original 14 recipes.

So how did *hoşaf*, a term used for hundreds of years, turn into *komposto*, the name found on menus today? "Sherbet", "pilaff", "coffee" and "halva" are all words that migrated west over the centuries. In the political and economic turmoil of the 19th century, as French became the lingua franca, the tide turned. Fashion and new lifestyles brought new customs and table manners. Just as à la turca and à la franga became everyday parlance, so *rozbif*, *mayonez*, *garnitur*, *sos* and *sorbé* seeped from the French into the Turkish culinary repertoire.

In 1882 Ayşe Fahriye Hanım published her cookery manual, *Ev Kadını* (*Housewife*), offering practical tips to young housewives, with recipes for both new and traditional dishes. Among her 22 classic *hoşafs*, readers suddenly found *Ananas Kompostosu*, or pineapple compote – pineapple being a novelty popularised by tinned imports arriving via Italy. These are what probably ushered in the word *komposto* (from the Italian *composta*). Today even in traditional *lokantas*, the term *hoşaf* has been replaced by *komposto*, although some argue that *hoşaf* should be used if dried fruit is involved.

Compotes remain an essential part of the Turkish diet. In summer, when fruit is abundant, they are generally made with fresh fruit. Come the autumn, apples, pears and quinces are joined by dried fruits, which take over in winter. At whatever time of year Ramazan falls it is still unthinkable to break the fast in the evening without a bowl of compote served with *pilav* or savoury pastry.

Remarkably – despite all the different spellings used over the centuries – all the *hoşafs* have used the same basic method. Whether for formal occasions or as everyday desserts, *hoşaf* is simple to make, versatile, healthy and packed with flavour.

ÜRYANİ HOŞAFI
'NAKED PLUM' COMPOTE

200g 'üryani' prunes
1 glass sugar (200g)
3 glasses water (750ml)

In Kastamonu, ancient Paphlagonia, a very special plum is grown high above the Black Sea: the *üryani erik*, or "naked plum", so called because its thin skin is removed before it is dried in the sun to preserve for winter. This roundish purple fruit is delicious fresh (see CORNUCOPIA 44). The prunes make a sought-after delicacy. Old Istanbullus would keep them in the larder to serve to guests as an elegant *hoşaf* (pictured previous page). Nowadays they can be ordered from Kastamonu (eg, from iksir.com). The more usual prunes with skins also make a flavoursome compote but they need to be cooked for longer.

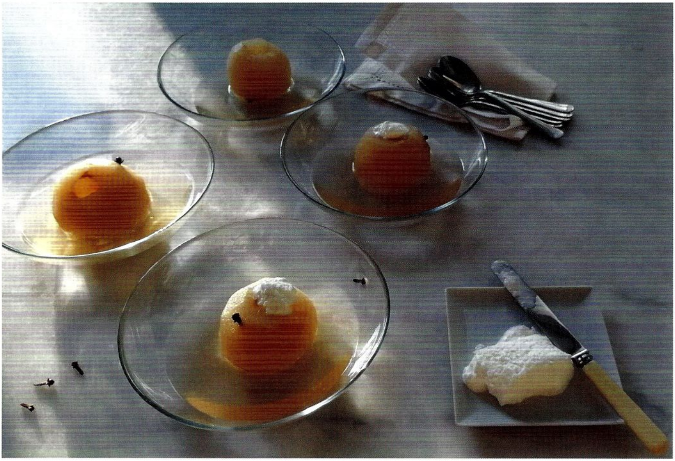
1 Soak the prunes overnight.
2 Boil the sugar and water to make a light syrup and add the rinsed prunes. When boiling again turn the heat down to the minimum and simmer for 5 to 10 minutes, to avoid letting them disintegrate. (If you are using ordinary prunes, cook a little longer, until they plump up.)
3 Leave to cool, covered, and serve chilled.

ELMA KOMPOSTOSU
APPLE COMPOTE

4 apples (firm and even in size)
1 glass sugar (200g)
3 glasses water (750ml)
4 cloves
'Kaymak' or clotted cream

Since my childhood, the humble apple has been a dear friend, and I have never met anyone who did not like the fruit. Fresh from the branch, baked into pies, cooked with savoury dishes, poached as a compote or dried as a snack, an apple is always a joy. For compote use any apples: windfalls, harvest leftovers, even supermarket varieties.

1 Rinse the apples and set aside.
2 Boil the sugar and water to a simple syrup.
3 Keeping the apples whole, remove the core and pips with an apple corer, then peel one at a time, pierce with a clove, and drop



Apple Compote: cloves bring the fragrance of carnations to poached apples, served here with 'kaymak', or clotted buffalo cream

into the simmering syrup without delay, to prevent discoloration.

4 Poach for 5 to 10 minutes on a gentle heat, so that the apples soften without losing their shape, and leave to cool before placing them in the fridge.

5 Serve chilled in individual bowls, standing the fruit upright, and ladling the syrup over to half-fill the bowl.

6 If using *kaymak* (solid buffalo cream, which comes in rolls), cut into finger-thick slices, and stuff each apple with a slice, taking care not to smear the juice or fruit. Clotted cream can be piped or spooned in.

VİŞNE KOMPOSTOSU
COMPOTE OF SOUR CHERRIES

250g vişne, or sour cherries (fresh or frozen)

2 glasses water (500ml)

1 glass sugar (200g)

This has always been one of the most popular *hoşafs*. The sour *vişne* cherry season is in early August and passes very quickly – Istanbul housewives hurry to market not to miss it, as *vişne* are very versatile. They make a deliciously tart dessert – the equivalent of summer pudding (see CORNUCOPIA 54 for the recipe for *vişne tiridi*), a refreshing sherbet or a marvellous *hoşaf*. Dried *vişne* cherries are also available, but nowadays frozen cherries work perfectly well – an added perk is that they are already stoned.

Ali Eşref Dede, sheikh of the Mevlevi dervish lodge in Edirne, believed *hoşaf* should speak not just to the taste buds but "to all five senses". In *A Treatise on Food* (*Yemek Risalesi*), written around 1858, he gives us a simple trick to make the cherries float to the surface: parboil the plumpest and best-looking and add them to the syrup afterwards – they are less dense than the syrup, so they won't sink. To enjoy the brilliant colour to the full, serve the compote in glass bowls.

1 If using fresh cherries, wash, remove the stalks and place in a deep pan. If using frozen ones, add directly to the pan without bothering to thaw them.

2 Add the water and sugar and cook until the skins crack slightly, releasing deep ruby-purple juice into the syrup.

3 Remove from the heat and leave to cool, covered. Store in the fridge until needed.

4 Serve chilled with a couple of ice cubes for extra coolness.

ARMUT KOMPOSTOSU
PEAR COMPOTE

4 evenly sized pears

1 glass sugar (200g)

3 glasses water (750ml)

Juice of half a lemon

Small slice of beetroot or purple carrot, or food colouring (optional)

Crème fraiche or ice cream (optional)

This elegant dessert makes the perfect way to end a meal. Serve the pear upright. To eat, hold the stalk and remove spoonfuls with the other hand. Often on the menu in Ottoman households, this was very popular with palace ladies, who, according to the late Neslişah Sultan, daughter of the last Caliph, would dip bread into the syrup. This *hoşaf* is also a delightful way to transform hard, unripe pears. Any variety will do, so long as the pears are of equal size and have their stalks. Old recipes recommend adding cochineal for colour. A drop of food colouring or, better still, a small slice of beetroot or purple carrot added to the hot syrup will give the dish an inviting rosy tint. Though not traditional, a dash of kirsch can add a little kick.

1 Rinse and peel the pears whole, leaving the stalk and the calyx at the other end intact.
2 Bring the sugar and water to the boil. When the sugar dissolves, add the lemon juice, pears and beetroot or carrot (if used). Poach over a gentle heat for 10 to 15 minutes, until the pears are tender when pierced with the tip of a knife but still retain their shape.
3 Take off the heat, cover and leave to cool.
4 Serve chilled, standing each pear upright in an individual compote bowl or glass tumbler. Ladle the syrup over, discarding the beetroot or carrot. A dollop of crème fraiche or ice cream gives this simple *hoşaf* a festive touch.

AYVA KOMPOSTOSU
QUINCE COMPOTE

2 large quinces
6 glasses water (1.5l)
1 glass sugar (200g)

Who can resist the golden quinces piled high on market stands from early autumn? Their light fragrance and the lovely pink they turn when cooked make them immensely enjoyable as a compote, jam or jelly. The peel and pips are rich in pectin, which gives the syrup its consistency; poaching before adding the sugar releases the pectin into the cooking liquid. In the past the quince of choice was a slightly acidic variety known as *limon ayvası* (lemon quince), but no quince will fail to give a rewarding result.

1 Peel, quarter and core the quinces. Halve each quarter lengthways and put in a pan.
2 Add the water with some of the peel and a few pips. Bring to the boil, then poach over a low heat for about an hour, until the fruit is tender and the cooking liquid has reduced.
3 Add the sugar and simmer on a very low heat until the fruit turns pink.
4 Remove the peel and serve chilled.

PRUNE AND APRICOT COMPOTE, TOPPED WITH BANANA, BRINGS SUNSHINE TO THE TABLE IN WINTER

KARIŞIK HOŞAF
PRUNE AND APRICOT COMPOTE

100g prunes
100g dried apricots
1 glass sugar (200g)
3 glasses water (750g)
1 banana (optional)
Fresh yoghurt (optional)

This simple compote is addictive. In winter, when fresh fruit is often forced and tasteless, it brings real summer sunshine to the table. Dried fruit is also easy to travel with, so you can make it wherever you happen to be. But like all dried fruit, the prunes and apricots need to be soaked overnight to soften. Old recipe books recommend keeping the water but, personally, I would throw it away, as fruit dried in the open air is bound to collect dust.

1 Soak the prunes and apricots in plenty of water overnight. If it is a late decision, soak in boiling water for at least an hour before cooking to reduce the chewiness.
2 Boil the sugar and water in a deep pan to make a simple syrup.
3 Rinse the soaked fruit and add to the simmering syrup. Cook over a gentle heat, covered, for 10 to 15 minutes, until it softens and plumps up further and the syrup has thickened slightly.
4 Remove from the heat, cover and leave undisturbed until cold enough to put into the fridge.
5 Serve chilled, in individual bowls, topped with slices of banana or a dollop of fresh yoghurt. Both are optional but worthwhile.

VİŞNE VE ELMA HOŞAFI
SOUR CHERRY AND APPLE COMPOTE

4 apples (peeled, cored and sliced)
40g dried sour cherries
Apple juice
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon ground cardamon
Lemon juice
Sugar

This spicy *hoşaf* is from *Samarkand: Recipes & Stories from Central Asia & the Caucasus*, a book by two able travellers and brilliant food writers, Caroline Eden and Eleanor Ford. More then just a cookery book, it has lots of regional recipes and gorgeous photographs.

1 Put the apples, cherries and spices in a pan and pour over a splash of apple juice. Bring to a bubble, cover with a lid and lower the heat. Poach gently for 20 minutes or until the cherries have swollen and the apple is soft throughout.
2 Add a squeeze of lemon juice and taste the fruit; it should be sweet and sour. Adjust the seasoning, adding sugar or more lemon juice to sweeten or sharpen. Leave to cool. ◆

Berrin Torolsan, bt@cornucopia.net.
For a full list of cookery articles from past issues, see cornucopia.net/cookery

● *Ogier de Busbecq's 'Turkish Letters' translated by Edward Foster (Eland £12.99) is available from cornucopia.net/books*

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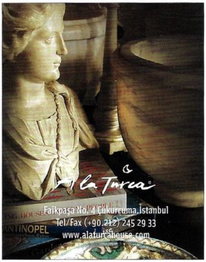

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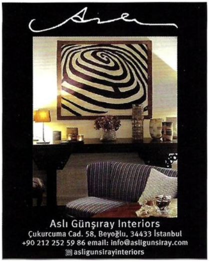
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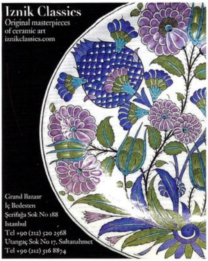
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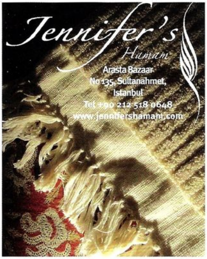

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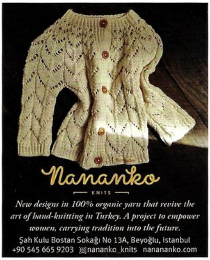

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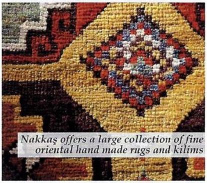
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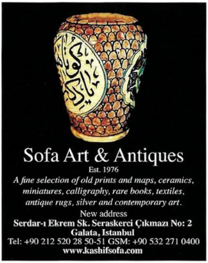

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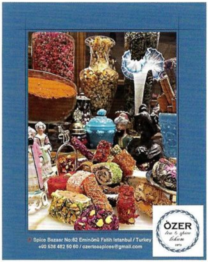

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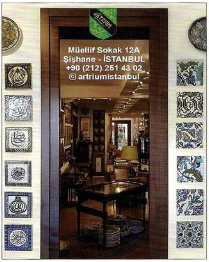

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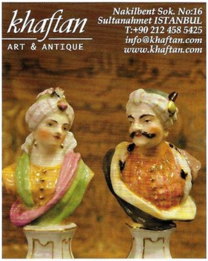

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Virtuoso reality

In a year of desperately challenging circumstances and seemingly impossible restrictions imposed on live events, John Shakespeare Dyson has found himself pleasantly surprised and his spirits lifted by a range of memorable concerts – both classical and jazz. Bravo!

In a year in which many musicians have been reduced to getting jobs in restaurants or selling their instruments, any concerts that actually took place were a source of deep gratitude. And so I must express my heartfelt thanks to the İKSV (Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts) for keeping their annual classical music and jazz festivals going with a series of online concerts, thus providing our musician brothers and sisters with at least some work, and at the same time keeping us listeners aware of what it is like to be a human being in possession of two ears and more than that number of feelings.

In November 2019 and the succeeding months, the Istanbul Recitals in the Seed – the Sakıp Sabancı Museum's bubble-like subterranean concert hall in Emirgan – featured three outstanding pianists. First we heard Nikolai Demidenko, a Russian now resident in the UK, play works by Chopin, Schubert, Scriabin and Prokofiev. Mr Demidenko impressed with his precision, his restraint and his chameleon-like ability to produce a new pianistic style for each piece – the mark of a top-rank musician.

In the next recital, Irishman Finghin Collins showed that apart from being a master of timing, he has the gift of communicating passion without allowing himself more than the merest smidgeon of rubato. We heard two Beethoven sonatas, including the hand-crushing *Appassionata*; then, in the later of Schubert's two A major sonatas, Beethoven's harsh histrionics gave way to a mouth-watering limpidity.

Things can't go on like this, I thought… but they did. In March the British pianist Imogen Cooper treated us to some Chopin, Schubert's *Moments Musicaux* and his Sonata in G major. Ms Cooper's *pianissimo* was exquisite in its calm intensity – so ethereal that one could almost hear the voices of the Little People coming through. This unforgettable concert, coming as it did just prior to lockdown, was a most fitting farewell to the joys of listening to live music.

The Istanbul Recitals also featured the Armenian cellist Alexander Chaushian and Soyoung Yoon, a Korean lady violinist. Mr Chaushian played two of Bach's solo suites. The bass notes boomed so viscerally that had he been playing down on the shore they might have vibrated the funnels off the ships passing along the Bosphorus.

Ms Yoon, meanwhile, entertained us – accompanied by the German pianist Mario Häring – with Dvořák, Brahms and Bartók. The experience of hearing a violin played with such excoriating robustness was so overwhelming that afterwards I was left gasping and unable to rise from my seat. It was a good thing the audience took a long time to disperse; otherwise I might have had to be shooed out by the cleaners.

In March I attended an orchestral concert – the last I would witness in the flesh in 2020 – at the Zorlu Center. The Avrasya Philharmonic, conducted by Rengim Gökmen, played Beethoven's euphoric *Symphony No 7* and his *Piano Concerto No 5*, in which the soloist was the redoubtable İdil Biret. The orchestra responded well to Mr Gökmen's skilful direction, but my gratitude goes chiefly to the lady sitting next to me for submitting me to a test of spiritual grit: she spent the entire concerto communing with her two mobile telephones. I hope they appreciated the attention.

The rest of the year's diet of classical music was all of the online variety. In September a concert featuring young string players from Turkey, the UK and Germany was streamed from a church on Büyükada. Their conductor, Dr James Ross, had initially come to the Princes Islands in March and then been stranded there by the pandemic. As a result of this enforced residence his Turkish is now substantially improved. These days Turkey is producing a string of good harpists (no pun intended), and the solo part in Debussy's *Danse sacrée et danse profane* was ably performed by Ms Yonca Atar.

The İKSV Istanbul Music Festival then sprang into action. I most enjoyed a concert recorded in the Tophane-i Amire building, once a cannonball foundry. String players were conducted by Mr Cem Mansur in works by Sibelius, Arvo Pärt, Piazzolla, Turina and Puccini. The playing and conducting were excellent, and the recording quality so good that one could almost pick out the voice of each individual instrument. Streamed concerts do have their advantages.

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And so to jazz. Back in November 2019, I heard ace vocalist Sibel Köse, genius trumpeter İmer Demirer (now, sadly, retired) and friends perform at the Badau, a club located in a shopping mall on the Asian side. I react to shopping malls – those gleaming horrors – as one would to a hissing cobra displaying a different brand name on each of its fangs. However, I overcame my aversion for long enough to hear the waiters tell each other how "good" the performers were. Wrong choice of adjective: the performers were superb.

No sooner had the İKSV Istanbul Music Festival got under way than the İKSV Jazz Festival popped up like a most welcome jack-in-the-box ("jazz-in-the-box"?) in early October. I heard Selen Gülün, Ece Göksu and (once again) Sibel Köse display their multifarious talents. Then, in a concert that featured pop rather than jazz, Make Mama Proud – purveyors of pessimistic rock – were followed by BaBa Zula, whose upbeat interpretation of Turkish ethnic genres created a lighter mood – one almost felt able to give the finger to current troubles.

Rather than look back to the days when we innocently thought we would always be able to go to concerts and sit next to each other, let us take heart from the astrologers. The traditional significator of infectious diseases is Neptune, and on March 13, 2021 (at the Pisces new moon), lovely Venus nears a conjunction with Neptune that should soften the scourge-monger sea god's heart as both the sun and moon make conciliatory overtures to bad boy Pluto. So I cherish the hope that, before long, the Masked Muses will be gracing our stages once more. ◆

Turkish orchestras to watch

Orchestras are understandably reluctant to commit to concert programmes, but ones to watch are the **Presidential Symphony Orchestra** (cso.gov.tr), **İzmir State Symphony Orchestra** (izmirsenfoni.gov.tr), **Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra** (idso.gov.tr), **Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic** (borusansanat.com). I will give a shout-out on my blog, cornucopia.net/musicalshares, if there is any sign of Musical Muse Euterpe's panpipes popping up again.

John Shakespeare Dyson is a freelance writer, translator and editor, and CORNUCOPIA'S *music critic; musicalshares@cornucopia.net*

Mega bites

Thanks to the virus, it's been a year of eating in rather than dining out for Andrew Finkel, bar a brief respite in the summer, when he escaped to a few choice restaurants. Luckily, Istanbul's markets still offer the best of seasonal ingredients, and online the range of new taste sensations to explore is limitless

It was 20 years ago that I made the comforting discovery that the very best tools for saving the environment were a knife and fork. I was a jury member on the first Slow Food Award for the Defence of Bio-Diversity – not a singular honour but one shared by scores of food writers, chefs and portly gourmands who had been shepherded into Bologna's Aula Magna di Santa Lucia to select producers from around the world who cultivated, herded, hunted or gathered in a sustainable way.

I remember listening to the organiser of a milk and cheese cooperative in Mauritania describe the difficulties of milking obstinate camels (at what a Christmas-cracker pun would call a drom-e-dairy). One of the top prizes went to the late Veli Gülas, a Turkish beekeeper on his first ever trip away from his mountain home in Hemşin above the Black Sea. He harvested honey in a way Pooh Bear might approve of – from hives nestled in trees rather than in the more commercial box frames. These provided sanctuary for the endangered Caucasian bee, whose elongated proboscis in turn helped ensure the survival of woodland blossom.

Encouraging Western consumers to be more discerning might be the stuff of supermarket ads now but was not even greenwash then. The Slow Food movement had set out on a difficult journey to persuade people to pay over the odds to provide a decent livelihood to the true custodians of threatened habitats, all the while preserving the variety of flavours and textures of the food they produced.

The hopeful precedent was viniculture and the prices people paid to appreciate wine. But, we asked ourselves, were there really connoisseurs prepared to dig deep into their pockets for a knobbly blue potato or the myriad species of free-range turkey, tastier but so much scrawnier than the factory-farmed kind?

At one point we were bussed off to the city of Turin to attend the Salone del Gusto, the enormous and frenetic gastronomic convocation Slow Food had organised in a convention centre that had once been a Fiat car factory. There I attended a seminar given by Alice Waters, the fabled chef and founder of Chez Panisse, the Berkeley restaurant that taught Californians to eat like… well, Californians – ie to do healthy, innovative things with local ingredients. I confess the denouement of her talk was the wrong side of disappointing when her kitchen crew served us all a watery paper-plateful of *bollito misto*, the Northern Italian offering of simmered meats. Something must have gone wrong and I have referred to the dish ever after as "mixed boils". Far more inspiring was her message: that the way to plan your next meal was to explore local markets and outlets for what looked appetising rather than motor to the nearest hypermarket with a list of preconceived ideas. Ms Waters self-deprecatingly described her skill as "not cooking but shopping".

It was the more reassuring description of an Istanbul food culture that relies on the quality of ingredients as much as the inventiveness of the chef. What could be more quintessentially Istanbul than a *lüfer* (bluefish), freshly caught, gently grilled over a charcoal fire, no sauce – maybe not even a squeeze of lemon – and served whole, with the eyes staring at you and the skeleton still in place? And what could be more delicious?

It might be less true than it once was, but Istanbul still abides by the dictates of the seasons. The artichokes arrive in spring, only to yield pride of place to the apricots and peaches of summer. I mark the arrival of autumn by waiting, on a Saturday afternoon, for the lorry that brings produce from İnebolu to a shopfront in the neighbourhood of Kuzguncuk, the **İnebolu Köy Pazarı**, and rummaging around the crates it delivers in the hope of finding wild mushrooms and chestnuts to turn into soup.

Bollito misto aside, Alice Waters's message was that restaurants were places to learn. An obvious reason for eating out is to experience things you just can't do at home, from want of manpower, equipment, skill or patience. It is the rare cove who keeps a wheel of döner in the larder or can be faffed to carve a tomato into butterflies to decorate their scrambled eggs. Yet equally exciting is the discovery of dishes that you could and should prepare yourself, new spices that belong on your kitchen shelf, ideas not just to duplicate but to tweak or try to improve.

The solution for many has been to move onto the internet – the digital equivalent of lowering a basket on a string from an upstairs window

That line between eating out and eating in has become increasingly faint in these odd, Covid-inflicted times. Indeed, as of writing there is no eating out. In Istanbul, as elsewhere in the world, restaurants are only allowed to dispense takeaways. There are night-time curfews and movement is restricted over the entire weekend. It is still possible to follow Alice Waters' advice "to shop" by donning a mask and roaming the neighbourhood markets, although we no longer prod and poke the produce with the old sense of pleasure or impunity. The solution for many has been to move onto the internet – the digital equivalent of lowering a basket on a string from an upstairs window.

There was a brief period of respite over the summer, when Istanbul restaurants were able to thumb their noses at the pandemic, particularly at socially-distanced tables outdoors. I was generally careful, but I did manage an outing to the Trabzon Cultural Association (**Trabzon Kültür Derneği**), an institution catering to those homesick for the Black Sea's largest city. There is a large restaurant, but my principal reason for being there was to attend a retrospective for Yusuf Katipoğlu (1941–2018), an artist and family friend I still mourn. His canvases are animated by an exuberant personality, a talent for storytelling and an ability to make nature, calligraphy and the objects of everyday life come alive.

It was a misty day, and the view from the dining room, cantilevered over a green hillside tucked into the Bosphorus somehow made me think I was in the countryside of his native Trabzon and Covid far away. I sat down to raise a lunchtime glass of rakı in Yusuf's memory. After months of my own cooking, I was ready for some ethnic comfort food – beginning with a hearty cabbage soup. Along the way, I discovered *kaygana* (a cross between a crepe and a frittata, all smothered in herbs), which I have subsequently reproduced myself using lightly wilted spinach.

I also kept a promise to myself to have a meal on the very edge of the Bosphorus at the **Waterfront** at the **Sumahan on the Water Hotel**. The tables were far apart and it felt very safe as we partook of the ultimate Istanbul luxury – a view all the way down the Bosphorus past the first bridge to the sun setting over the historic peninsula. The menu is a clever mix of Turkish and international greatest hits, a decent wine list

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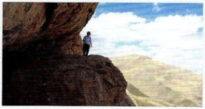

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and surprisingly good sweets. But it was location, location, location – that sense of having the city all to yourself, a privilege in the best of times – that proved a particular tonic against the sense of the outside world closing in.

Another meal out was in the garden of **İnciraltı**, a superior meyhane which I have praised in this column before, including their sea bass wrapped in vine leaf. The meze is that little bit unusual, although I should confess that after so long a period of abstinence I would even have settled for common-or-garden meze. Included is sizzling roasted tripe, far tastier than it sounds, although probably every bit as unhealthy – and not something I will try at home.

Others have tried to fill the void by having meals delivered, and although I have installed the popular phone app, Yemek Sepeti (which actually means "food basket"), the Turkish equivalent of Deliveroo or Uber Eats, the truth is that I have never actually used it. I assume the food will arrive congealed and certainly without backchat from a waiter. I accept that pizza, by custom, has become a meal of no fixed address – but I don't eat it very often.

I did decide to order directly from **Chinese & Sushi Express**, where the food is mediocre at the best of times, but I thought it might make a change. Instead, it turned out to be just not nice. I felt uncomfortable listening to the squelch as I emptied a vaccine-sized phial of soy sauce into what felt like an airline meal tray in my own house and then dealing with the detritus of single-use plastic once it was all quickly over. At least it didn't matter that the food arrived cold. I know there are better places for sushi. I pass on a friend's recommendation of **Orōro Sushi Bar** although, alas, I am outside its delivery range.

I do admit to being jealous of those who have managed to relocate during the pandemic to the virtual realm. Making purchases in front of a screen has the bizarre advantage of turning the whole world into one emporium. Although I have not tried it myself, a friend swears by **BeslenX**, a food cooperative based in the northeastern tip of Turkey, in Kars, a region famous for its cheeses, including a gruyère with authentic Swiss holes. But they deliver a wider variety of items, interesting flours and even sourdough starters, as well as entire geese.

I am proud of my one great discovery: cheese from the **Tangala** farm, near Fetihye. This is no trivial matter – the absence of soft, smelly cheese in Turkey has been a hole in my life that I used to fill with trips abroad, a disappearing luxury over the past year. Amber is fruitier and more pungent than camembert, after which it is coyly named. There are excellent varieties of chèvres and a blue cheese which is... I guess the word is "funky".

I read that Tangala cheese is on sale in retail outlets like Macro. I first discovered it at **The Istanbul Butcher**, a shop where the meat is on display with no less panache than the necklaces at Harry Winston, which also produces decent merguez sausage and an array of charcuterie. But you can also order Tangala cheese over the internet. In today's Covid-restricted world, as Alice Waters might have said, we don't even do shopping so much as shopping online. ◆

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David Barchard

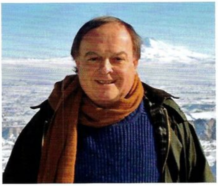
On Christmas Day we lost a fine journalist and historian with a deep love of Turkey. An intellectual who wrote with great ease, loyal, funny – and often querulous – he inspired friends and students across the world. Here, Roger Norman sifts through the tributes, and opposite, Patricia Daunt recalls happy memories of a long friendship

As many readers will have heard, Cornucopia lost one of its favourite sons on Christmas Day, when David Barchard, out walking in his Yorkshire village, had a bad fall from which he failed to recover. Many people wrote in with affectionate tributes, from which we have culled a few comments and reminiscences. One obituary, by Edward Mortimer, has appeared in the *Financial Times*, and *The Guardian* has published another, written by his old friend David Shankland.

One is struck by the great number and variety of people helped and guided by David Barchard over the years, some of them going back to the time of his first job in Turkey, as a teacher in Zonguldak in the early 1970s, right up to the indefatigable series of links and emails that issued from Barchard's desk during recent decades, keeping us abreast of the latest Turkish developments. Everybody remembers this about him first of all – his immense generosity in terms of time, advice and information. "A very, very kind man," was one comment among the tributes we received. And nobody, but nobody, quarrelled with the verdict that he knew as much about Turkish politics and history as any foreigner of our era.

Being generous and kind did not necessarily make him the easiest of companions. One friend spoke of "the very select group of people with whom Barchard had not at some time fallen out". David Barchard liked to be taken seriously and he wanted his considerable expertise to be valued. As one of our correspondents pointed out, "He expected educated people to be educated and friends to act as friends and adults to be adults and clever people to be ambitious and gifted people to be successful." Another close friend wrote as follows: "We enjoyed each other's company, quarrelled, patched up our differences, shared anecdotes and made fun of each other's foibles. There was a real depth of intellect and humanity about him, a sense of justice – and he could be as irritating as hell. The word 'endearing' keeps popping into my head. I am tempted to say 'childlike' as well, but I think that describes his inability to dissemble." Despite his sharp erudition and daunting knowledge, David Barchard *was* endearing.

Intriguing fragments from earlier times suggest stories yet to be told. The celebrated Turcophile Geoffrey Lewis supervised David's PhD at Oxford, but it was not completed. Did the subject – left-wing Turkish intellectuals – prove too much of a minefield? And to what does this refer: "We had quite a few moments in the 1980s, including briefing Harold Pinter and Arnold Wesker one cold and boozy night"?



Above left David in 1952, at the age of 5, with sisters Sue (left) and Tish
Top With Tish on her wedding day
Above A snowy day in Cappadocia, 2015, with Mount Erciyes in the distance

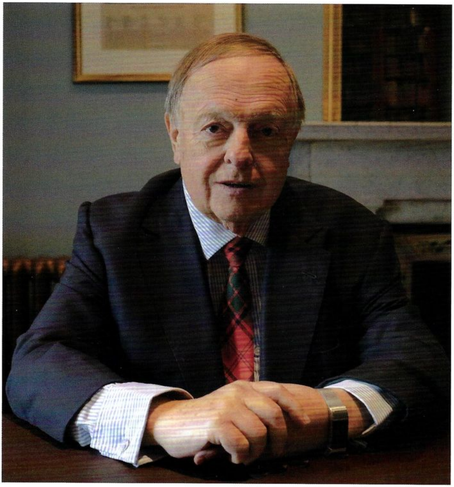
Professionally, Barchard will be remembered as a journalist and historian, and some of us may have the feeling that he never quite produced the volume of work of which he was obviously capable, even while establishing himself as the master of those two- or three-thousand-word essays and portraits that Cornucopia readers will so much miss. Perhaps, and rather unluckily, he was always too closely pursued by the need to think of his daily bread and butter. More than one acquaintance claimed that Barchard wrote news copy faster than anyone else, and it may have been partly this terrific speed of production that made his stories so readable. There always seemed to be the perfect mix of historical background, scholarly erudition and humorous gossip, as there was, indeed, in his conversation. His book on Asil Nadir and Polly Peck "we all read with fascination," wrote one reader, "both for his remarkable ability to uncover and make sense of a convoluted but fascinating story, and his fluent and engaging writing style".

His relationship to Turkey was one of immense and unflinching loyalty, in which there was a strong sense of duty. "Turkey has lost one of its staunchest friends," wrote Özdem Sanberk, former Turkish ambassador to Britain. "He was one Western friend never out of touch with Turkey and its people, always getting the measure of the challenges we have to meet and being fair to the Turkish side of the story when others were not."

David Shankland has summarised this in the strongest and simplest of terms: "He insisted that the foundation of the Republic aimed to create a rapprochement between Europe and Turkey that was absolutely essential for us to build on."

In Barchard's own words, quoted by one correspondent, "If one becomes a specialist in a certain field and sees that people are continually mistaken or misinformed, then one must work to set the record straight."

We received an interesting explanation of Barchard's inexhaustible fascination with his chosen field. "There's a timelessness in Anatolia. All the ages are wrapped up in one. Turks are aware of the rich profusion of the past. The British seem to want a


MONICA FRITZ

David Barchard (1947–2020) at the Reform Club, London, November 2019

manicured version of history. By contrast, ordinary Turks are enormously conscious of what they see around them and have the ability to apply their imagination to it."
One or two of our readers have emphasised the importance to David of his Catholic faith, and some may see links between the three great loyalties of his life: his religion, his friends and his adopted country. (It seems no exaggeration to express it so.)

There are, among the many tributes, eulogies from the great and the good, not least this: "He was an exceptional individual, true to himself, to his values, to his sense of decency, liberty and above all to the truth. He was highly intelligent and a genuine free-scholar, beholden to no man, let alone the agent of some callous ministry." More impressive still, perhaps, was the gratitude of strangers arriving in Ankara and receiving guidance, help and, often, generous hospitality from Barchard as correspondent of the BBC or *The Guardian* or the *FT* or special adviser to the Foreign Ministry (during Çiller's premiership).

This excerpt can be taken as representative: "My wife first met David by chance in a grocery store in Ankara. He was a neighbour when we were living there in 2005. I had just started working for the British Council on an EU-funded project and was still finding my feet. Although I had travelled extensively in Turkey, I had but a slight grasp of its history and no idea of how its institutions operated. David was hugely generous and helpful in assisting me to understand how things functioned in what even then was a difficult country, and as a sounding board in refining my analytical framework for what I was doing, without which I would have floundered completely. David was a fine, upstanding and unassuming man, and a very dear friend."

His legacy will live on in a memorial fund sponsoring an essay prize and scholarships. See *cornucopia.net/davidbarchard* for details and further tributes.

David will be greatly missed as writer or friend or both by Cornucopia and its readers. Next year we have his *Ottoman Lives*, published under our own imprint, to look forward to. How sad that this will now be a posthumous occasion.

Roger Norman is a novelist and teacher living in Eskişehir; rnorman@anadolu.edu.tr

GENEROUS TO THE END

By Patricia Daunt

My husband, Timothy, and I first met David in the early 1970s at supper in World's End in Chelsea with Bernard and Ines Burrows, doyens of Anglo-Turkish relations. Even then, David judged all ambassadors against the standards set by Bernard, a discerning judge and lover of all things Turkish, who took David's burgeoning Turkish expertise seriously. Not all subsequent ambassadors did, and they went into David's rather extensive black book. They had ignored Timothy's advice: "Listen to Barchard; you don't have to agree with him but remember he knows a great deal more about Turkey than you and I ever will." Some of the most prominent British archaeologists and commentators sadly did likewise, thereby denying themselves access to an unrivalled store of scholarship and expertise.

We evidently passed David's exacting and highly personal judgement, the keys to which were recognition of his standing and being genuinely fond of him: embassy hospitality counted with someone who, despite appearances, was both sensitive and affectionate. David was a generous host himself. Over the years, Timothy and I were lucky enough to have been taken on one meticulously planned tour of Yorkshire, which, typical of David, included a stop to give hospitality to a stricken ex-colleague, and countless adventures exploring lesser-known Cappadocian valleys.

On one memorable occasion, in a remote cave church, David stuck fast on a bend in the tufa – particularly dangerous since part of the wall had collapsed onto the apse – much to the amusement of the villager who had led us to it. The only way out was for David ignominiously to retreat backwards – a terrifying undertaking. For every invitation, whether in Yorkshire or Cappadocia, he resolutely refused to allow his guests to pay for anything; he preferred it that way.

If David was a prolific author of authoritative commentaries on Turkish and regional issues, sadly he found more ambitious publications difficult to complete, and was deeply hurt by lesser mortals who did. Our reaction to most of the many contemporary Turkey books was, "David would have done this so much better." The same applied to Cappadocia; we treasure the scroll-like guide he wrote but never published in the Eighties, as we did his hospitality in Üçhisar. Generous and sensitive to the end, David was latterly proud of his struggle with his weight: the daily walk, on the last of which he fell, and abstention from Yorkshire pork pies – a battle he was winning when it was cut short.

Patricia Daunt is a Cornucopia *contributor and author of 'The Palace Lady's Summerhouse'. Her husband, Sir Timothy Daunt, is a former ambassador to Ankara*

BEAUTY AND THE BEES

Christopher Trillo

'HONEYLAND', THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED FILM ABOUT A TURKISH VILLAGER IN MACEDONIA, CAPTURED HEARTS AND MINDS IN 2020

LJUBO STEFANOV

HATIDŽE MURATOVA PRACTISES THE ANCIENT ART OF WILD BEEKEEPING IN THE MACEDONIAN FILM 'HONEYLAND'

The film opens with a scene of breathtaking beauty. A tiny figure moves purposefully across an enormous wilderness to an accompaniment of birdsong and plaintive Balkan vocal music. She traverses a precipitous ledge and then, in stunning close-up, we see her face, serene and concentrated, as with bare hands she chisels into the rock face. She opens a chamber stacked with thick, ripe slabs of honeycomb, the colour of her blouse, and loud with the massed buzzing of contented bees. She pours cupfuls of bees gently onto the rocky ledge and carries them home in a basket on her back. There, in the ruins that are her village, silhouetted against a flaming sunset, she sings them majestically into their new home.

This is our introduction to Hatidže (Hatice), one of the last Turks still inhabiting this part of Macedonia. The film immerses us in a sensuous celebration of her life and world. One of the themes running through the episodic structure deals with her relationship with her 85-year-old mother, Nazife. The fixed camera looks on steadily through the candlelit gloom of a tiny room as Hatidže feeds, washes and cajoles her bedridden mother into sitting up. Asked if she would like to go out into the sunshine, she laments, "I can't move, I have become like a tree."

The film returns repeatedly to these beautifully shot, painterly scenes of a daughter's love tinged with regret and frustration. Such moments alternate dramatically with the brightness and energy of the world outside. There she is in her element, in harmony with her animals, above all her mass of tiny co-stars, the bees. They act as a kind of chorus, commenting noisily, sometimes painfully, on the action.

So far the film is a poignant record of a woman's strong, passionate engagement with her environment, her grace and ease with animals and people. But a noisy intrusion into this pastoral idyll adds another dimension. A battered truck pulls a decrepit caravan to a standstill among the ruins of the village and a dysfunctional semi-nomadic family spill out. They argue, shout and abuse each other as they undertake one botched enterprise after another. They dispense chaos, leaving a trail of rubbish, broken trust and neglected animals. A clash of lifestyles and values begins. The documentary becomes a drama.

The film cuts abruptly between the lyrical scenes with the bees, the poignancy of Hatidže's home life and the almost slapstick tragi-comedy of the family's fecklessness. These contrasts give *Honeyland* its extraordinary emotional depth. We not only feel Hatidže's pain at the unthinking despoliation of her habitat, but, through this, we see a larger tragedy. Her struggles carry an allegorical weight, showing a world of traditional, environmentally rooted values under threat from heedless sub-capitalist rapacity.

But ultimately the power of the film lies in its glorious physicality. The camera is in love with Hatidže and her world. It lingers on her serene, guileless face as she nurtures all around her: the kittens, the neighbours' unkempt children, her mother and, of course, the bees with which she has a mystical bond. Surviving the betrayal and casual cruelty of her neighbours, the final shot of the film shows her staring into the distance, unbowed and proud.

The directors, Tamara Kotevska and Ljubomir Stefanov, made *Honeyland* from 400 hours of footage shot over three years, and in doing so created a part-fiction. The action does not take place in the course of a single year and Hatidže, we deduce, is not entirely alone and unsupported. A community exists around her, briefly depicted at the lively country fair.

These quibbles do not diminish the film's haunting power and beauty. This is a powerful and moving film, an immersion in a disappearing world, an elegy for a way of life and a polemic for conservation. But above all, it is a sumptuous feast of sounds and images, fully deserving its Oscar nominations and Sundance Festival awards. ◆

'Honeyland' is available on Amazon and YouTube

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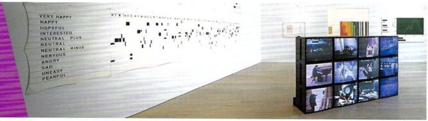

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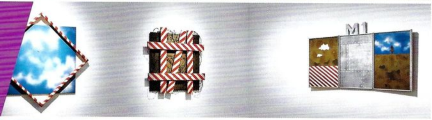

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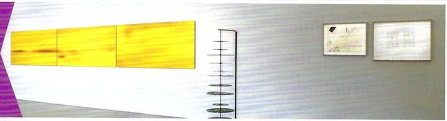

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